

PROPHETIC PREACHING TO ENHANCE THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF
LIBERATION CHRISTIAN CENTER MEMBERS THAT RESIDE IN THE
COMMUNITY OF ENGLEWOOD

James E. Dukes

B.S. in Business Administration, Chicago State University, 1992
Master of Arts in Community Counseling, Chicago State University, 2001
Master of Theological Studies, McCormick Theological Seminary, 2004

Mentors

Rudolph W. McKissick, Jr., D. Min.
Harold A. Carter, Jr., D. Min.

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ABSTRACT

PROPHETIC PREACHING TO ENHANCE THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF LIBERATION CHRISTIAN CENTER MEMBERS THAT RESIDE IN THE COMMUNITY OF ENGLEWOOD

By

James E. Dukes
United Theological Seminary, 2010

Mentors
Rudolph McKissick Jr., D. Min.
Harold Carter Jr., D.Min

The intent of this project was to determine if prophetic preaching could motivate individuals to engage in community action as it relates to sociopolitical issues. Various methodologies were conducted prior to exposure to prophetic preaching and teaching to determine the level of the social consciousness of family members in the oppressed and poverty stricken community of Englewood. Upon completion of the preaching and teaching of the project family members will be reevaluated and are expected to have a greater understanding of the sociopolitical issues in the community and how they can make a positive impact therein.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have come to fruition without those special women in my life that seem to be at every juncture of elevation. They continue to minister to me from their substance (Valerie, Bettie, Debra, Tiffany, Deborah, Mahogany and Unspeakable Joy). I am personally indebted to Harold A. Carter, Jr. and Rudolph W. McKissick, Jr., my mentors and my entire focus group. I have nothing but love for the greatest church in the world Liberation Christian Center. I would be remised if I didn't acknowledge the wind beneath my sails, my beloved Mother. Last be truly not least to those three that I live for and try to impress on a daily basis by setting a mark that is high above others my babies, Austin, Morgon, and Emerald (aka Baby Girl). Emmie be the tallest tree in the forest. And he shall place thy feet on high places!

James E. Dukes
Chicago, February 2010

DEDICATION

To those that are recovering one day at a time.

There are still those that who refuse to join us and take the path that we have chosen, because they feel they are unique. They may die. But may God bless them too.

I dedicate this work to your struggle.

We will go before God to be judged,
and God will ask us, "Where are your wounds?"
And we will say, "We have no wounds."
And God will ask, "Was nothing worth fighting for?"

Rev Allan Boesak
South Africa

INTRODUCTION

This project was designed to develop a model of ministry that would heighten the sociopolitical consciousness of individuals that reside in the Englewood community of Chicago that attend Liberation Christian Center. The model was implemented through sermons as well as focus groups and surveys as evaluation tools. The long term objective is that individuals would be identified as the conduits for their respective families and become involved in issues that directly effect their health, education, and financial resources. The author proposes that this model of ministry will have the effect of identifying the primary person within the family structure who will keep sociopolitical issues at the forefront of the family structure and thus the community.

The context in which this project will be implemented is Liberation Christian Center (LCC) located at 6810 S. Ashland, Chicago, IL in the community of Englewood. The assisting composition of community involvement at LCC is that the pastor as well as the ministries is aligned to empower the congregants with information and resources to spark concern with regard to the current ethos of the community. The assisting composition is very active in social services, political campaigns, and protests for justice and equality in education. Cornel West in *Prophesy Deliverance*, writes:

“Since the American philosophical profession continues today to be even more removed from any cultural and political strife than it was in the golden age, to launch the prospect of an Afro-American religious philosophy with a deep sense of cultural and political engagement is an implicit indictment of contemporary American philosophical thought.”¹

¹ Cornel West, “*Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-America n Revolutionary Christianity*” (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press: 1982), preface.

Liberation Christian Center's commitment is to assure that this deep sense of cultural and political engagement has a voice in the Englewood community. Evaluating the effectiveness of the preached message and the collective efforts of the ministry to spread justice beyond the walls of the sanctuary by pouring it into the street is the charge to this author. The role of the author is to utilize preaching and teaching as an agent of change within the individual that will spark outrage, or the very least a common concern, within the family structure. It has been the history of LCC that the congregants' conscious was directly linked to the pastor's sociopolitical agenda. The intent of this project is to inspire free thought amongst the congregants that will result in direct action to tether power to justice within the community, with or without the pastor's involvement. The familial institution serves as the birth place for change and creates a culture of social action within the neighborhood. It was stated to this author by a 9-year old student, "...the problem with the 'hood' is that the neighbor has been removed."² Neighbors tend to have common interests, common concerns and the family is the root of all healthy neighborhoods.

The primary mission of this project was to teach and preach prophetically to evoke an awareness of communal issues that affect the families of Englewood residents that attend Liberation Christian Center. In this manuscript, the author will discuss the ethos of the Englewood community and how LCC responds to those social ills that are devastating that community without notice or alarm from educators, law enforcement, politicians or residents. The methods that will be demonstrated in this work are crucial to the salvation of individuals, families and communities that are oppressed throughout this nation and gives credence to the formation of this model of ministry for all that suffer; the silent majority.

² (In a conversation with author at an 8th grade commencement ceremony , June 2009)

Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man* writes, “We create the race by creating ourselves and then to our great astonishment we will have created something far more important: We will have created a culture.”³

³ Ibid, Introduction.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The African American church has historically been the foundation and birthing of sociopolitical change in the black communities. One could say that for every major shift in the black community, the church as an institution has had preeminent role. It is with these historical emphases and the thrust of a revolutionary Gospel that Liberation Christian Center humbly strives to be the answer (just as Moses) to the voice that cried out in the wilderness. It is the author's "on the backside of the mountain" experience that has lead to the formation of this project.

The Way It Was

The author was born May 4, 1968 at 1:15 AM to Mr. and Mrs. James S. Dukes of Chicago, Illinois, the youngest of five siblings. His mother, Virginia, would constantly remind him that her labor was delayed because of the traumatic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. a month earlier. This somehow would forever link the author, subconsciously, to the life and death of this modern era prophet.

She shared another interesting story about her labor. As the story goes, she was in labor for well over 18 hours and there were complications in the delivery because the author was breach. They could not turn him without choking him with the umbilical cord. The doctor told his father, James, that it could very well be a choice between the child and the mother. He emphatically stated, "Save the mother!" because he would not be left taking care of those other kids by himself.

This would become the earliest indication of the author's relationship with his father, which would be non-existent. He and the mother divorced when he was four. The author's only

remembrance of the occurrence was the father leaving and saying "I will see you soon." It would be twenty years before he would ever see his father again. It is the belief of the author that his departure contributed directly to the maladaptive behavior that was exhibited in the author's life during adolescence.

The author is not at liberty to describe his childhood as a pleasant experience and it was not due to family, neighborhood, or economic status. He spent a lot of time mad for what appeared to be no apparent reason. He was constantly angry, fought all the time, cursed all the time. Having a Napoleon complex, he sought to prove that he was tough and would not take anything off anybody. He frequently would enter into new surroundings defiant and resist all authority figures by challenging their intellect because he believed he was just as smart. It would become his personal goal to bring whomever he was associated with down at any cost. He was labeled as a "bad boy." The parents of his peers would say, "Don't let me catch you playin' with lil' Jimmy, he is bad to the bone." If any mischief occurred in the neighborhood they would immediately come to the author's house with questions of his possible involvement.

The writer was suspended repeatedly in grammar school for infractions such as fighting the teacher, walking out of school, possession of a switchblade, as well numerous physical altercations throughout the school year. It was at Marcus Garvey Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois that he encountered his first male mentor, Mr. Joseph Haley. This was monumental as the author had had limited interaction with men. His eldest brother, Fred, was in college and his other brother, Johnny was only one year older. Therefore, all his life experiences were defined from a woman's perspective; his mother, his aunts (all divorced), and his sisters (Valerie and Deborah). These women constantly expressed their opinions of what a real man should be, how he should act, how he should look, how he should take care of his children and, most of all, how

he should treat a real black woman. This is all he could remember hearing as a child, “If he is a real man he will blah, blah, and blah...”

His sisters had the greatest influence on his social activities because his mother was working to take care of six children as a single parent. It is ironic that his childhood activities lead him to be more aligned with the issues of African American women and mothers. As a boy they had him jumping rope, playing hop scotch, cheerleading, polishing nails, giving facials, doing splits and any other things in which a little sister would participate. This really didn't bother him and it is his belief that it granted him an opportunity to stay in touch with his feminine side. In retrospect it was also a major contributor to his ministry since he is able to tap into the raw emotions that women experience. Understandably, Mr. Haley was a much needed shift in his life and must have been sent from God.

Mr. Joseph Haley was the elementary school assistant principal and disciplinarian. They forged a lasting relationship that has stayed with the author. Whenever he got in trouble he was immediately sent to his office and he used a far different approach to handling him then he was accustomed. He had the audacity to act as if he cared about him and his future. Since he was in his office so much he became his surrogate teacher and challenged his skills by having him find twenty words with the suffix “cide.” This was awesome to him since he was learning things that the other students were not getting and he was learning it because he got into trouble.

Mr. Haley explained to his mother that his fundamental problem was that he was bored and unchallenged by the curriculum. Therefore, he became disruptive because his intelligence exceeded his peers. He suggested that he should be placed in a gifted program for overachievers. Marcus Garvey Elementary School had no such program and it was recommended by all the staff (they wanted to get rid off him) that he be bused to the “white folks” school. In his new

environment he could focus, concentrate and be challenged by like-minded adolescents of his cohort. It was one big psychosocial experiment. The Chicago Board of Education had created a magnet school where a boy and a girl of each ethnicity would be placed in the same classroom with the same curriculum so that it could determine were there any socioeconomic barriers to learning. He was a natural fit for the new program as he was young, gifted, and black.. He was partnered with LaShawn [REDACTED] the smartest and prettiest girl in his class and to top it off she was a preacher's daughter. It was him and LaShawn [REDACTED] against the world, every Irish, Japanese, Chinese, Asian, Jewish, Indian, German, and European couple, and they did not disappoint their blackness in this social race. They kicked butt in every subject and activity. This was truly one of the crowning moments of his childhood and also marked the moment when he realized that race does matter. He was a black nationalist in the making, he just needed a cause.

It happened one morning when they were all riding to the Poe Magnet School for the Gifted that he got the opportunity to be a militant. When he first started to get bused to the all white school he was greeted with pleasantries of "nigga go home," "we hate Jews," "Japs should have died in Hiroshima." The white people hated just about everybody on the bus. Eventually the protestors got over the initial shock that they were going to keep coming back everyday and the reality that racists have to go to work too, helped squash the protests but racism was still present on the bus. There was an American Indian boy name Jimmy that sat in front of the author and every day Billy, an Irish boy, would pop him in the head, take his money, or make him get out of his seat. The writer became fed up with these antics so he told Jimmy, "if you sit next to me they will not bother you, as a matter of fact I will stomp them down if that is your desire." Jimmy looked at him with tears in his eyes and simply stated, "James, I would rather they hate me than to be your friend."

As the author's social and academic life was taking form, his life in church was equally as challenging and interesting. His mother was a church going woman to say the least. They were members of Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist church where the pastor was Dr. Donald L. Parson. She held several positions in the church but her passion was always Sunday school. Sunday school teachers in the 1970's still held the esteem of an elementary school teacher, a person that was given reverence and respect. His mother loved children and the Bible. It seemed they went to church all the time; Monday, choir rehearsal; Tuesday, prayer meeting; Wednesday, Junior Laymen and Deacons meeting; Friday, teacher's meeting; some type of rehearsal on Saturday morning; and all day on Sunday. All that church and he was still a terror. Although church didn't stop his antics, it seemed to mellow his spirit.

The writer's fondest memory of church in his early years was when he was a Junior Deacon and they would wear black suits and carry big bibles. It seemed everybody was looking at them. His assignment was to pray, and did he pray. He prayed like Jesus was in the room and the old folks just loved it. His mother would just smile from ear to ear as she listened to her baby pray. Nobody could pray like Jimmy Dukes and every chance the church would get to put him up in the "big church" they would seize the moment. He just cherished the moment to pray and be an example of God. He started to believe what the women of the church were telling his mother, "Girl you got yourself a preacher there." Despite his ministerial aspirations, at night when he and his mother would pray, he would still always pray, "Lord, let me see my father before he dies because I want to curse him out and ask him why did he leave me."

The author always knew there was something special if not different about himself because he never quite fit in any crowd. There always seemed to be a sense of a greater purpose or calling in his life. He was attracted to history; in particular, great black men and how they

dedicated their lives to their race. He wanted to go down in history and be one of those celebrated during Black History Month. His greatest adoration was for Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr.; after all he was linked to him through the words of his mother.

At the age of twelve, he went to his youth pastor, Reverend [REDACTED] and informed him that he believed God had called him to preach. He seemed to be happy about the announcement and informed him that there were a few other Junior Deacons that believed they were called as well. He told them he would be able to preach a very brief message in a month so he could determine if he was ready.

The author didn't tell anyone, not even his beloved Mother, because if he flopped he didn't want it to be a big deal. He picked the story of David and Goliath and his sermon title was "Somebody's Got to Step Up." He was ecstatic but when he saw the expression on Reverend [REDACTED]'s face he instantly knew something was wrong. Reverend [REDACTED] pulled him to the side and told him couldn't let him preach because he may turn out to be one of those boy wonders and he could lose his job if he really could preach. He told the author he couldn't take that chance. The writer was crushed to say the least but at the same time relieved as he didn't want to be no punk ass preacher (this is what he told himself) anyway. This helped him get away from whatever God wanted him to do and get busy doing what Baby Gee (the author's nickname) wanted to do which was self destruct.

It seemed like he walked away from Reverend [REDACTED] directly into the streets. It was not long after that he began to smoke marijuana, cigarettes and drink alcohol. The author began using drugs, getting high, and intoxicated at thirteen. It would take him twelve years to realize that he was not getting "high" but was actually getting low.

Getting “high” had become the answer to all his problems. It helped him financially because he had become the dope man. It also seemed to make him smarter because he was getting straight A’s. The author will never forget sitting in Advanced Placement History and [REDACTED] leaned over and asked him to buy a joint. Now [REDACTED] was a straight nerd and he found it peculiar that he would want to smoke some marijuana. He said, “James if weed can make me as smart as you I need to smoke a joint.” The writer has never been an advocate for bringing a person down and he knew [REDACTED] lacked what it took to handle getting high. The author would never sell him any dope; it was strictly against the Dope Man code of ethics (whatever that was).

His bad behavior transformed him into the class clown. He was starting to gain attention by being funny and not violent. It netted the same result, suspension and time in the principal’s office but it made him very popular. He was popular, smart, surrounded by ladies, fashionable, had his mother’s car, had a job at McDonald’s, and he was selling marijuana. He was the man.

The author recalls taking the ACT one Saturday morning. It was no big deal; something all seniors had to do. About a month later he got called to the counselors’ office to discuss the results. Mr. West informed him that he had scored a 31 on the ACT. According to him this was a great score and with the author being ranked in the top ten at the school he could go to any college or university. Mr. West asked where scores should be forwarded and the author told him Alcorn State (gym teacher’s alma mater); Southern Illinois (girlfriend was going there); and Harvard (just because it was supposed to be for smart people). To the writer’s surprise he got accepted to all three. As a matter of fact, he received a full academic scholarship to Alcorn State and was accepted into a special minority program at Harvard. He had actually gotten accepted at Harvard. The writer had no clue of the magnitude of his acceptance to Harvard and obviously

neither did Mr. West. He strongly advised the author to attend Alcorn State University as it seemed less complicated whereas the Harvard acceptance came with stipulations. Of all the mistakes and errors the author made in his life, this is the one he would regret, not going to Harvard. He never questioned Mr. West's suggestion because deep in his heart he didn't want to go to school with white people again. The author was scarred from that busing experience plus he had Black Nationalist tendencies and an increasing hatred for white people.

The author was eighteen from the Southside of Chicago on his way to Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi and he was a prejudice that loved three things: Valerie Britts, sniffing cocaine, and smoking marijuana. He thought he was smart and indestructible. The author was not mentally prepared to deal with the slow pace of the South, but, once again, in God's omnipotent wisdom, it was exactly what was needed. He was once again in a new environment with new faces and new challenges.

The author was twenty years old when he met Rhonda [REDACTED] She was seventeen and still in high school. She was just another young girl that wanted to get high and have sex and he was more than willing to accommodate her. The author impregnated her and this pleased him because he wanted a son to prove to his absentee father that he was a better man. Three major events occurred in 1988, Rhonda got pregnant, the author met Miss Bettie [REDACTED] (future wife) and Lester [REDACTED] his best friend, died of a cocaine-induced heart attack. His death was devastating and he could not understand how God could take someone so young. The writer took it as a direct warning from God that God's will was more powerful than his. However, he ignored the warning and got even higher. Instead of stopping his use of cocaine, it increased. He was clearly becoming an addict and that was fine because God doesn't call addicts.

The author vividly remembers his mother returning home from church and briefing him about the sermon and how she laid down at the altar on his behalf. She thoroughly believed that God would send a sign indicating that he was chosen. That sign came one Saturday morning, while he was getting "high." There was a sudden knock on the door. At the door, to his dismay, was a Reverend. The gentleman stated, "Hi, my name is Reverend, later Bishop, Larry Trotter from Sweet Holy Spirit and we just opened our new church around the corner. Would you like to come by on Sunday?" The author was convinced that his mother had sent the preacher as he reached out and prayed for him. There was something genuine and special about his presence but the author was too busy getting high to go off on a spiritual trip.

The author married Bettie Lamar on July 18, 1992. He was so high on cocaine it was ridiculous. She was five months pregnant with his second child. His eldest son, Austin, was four at the time and his relationship with his mother was rocky at best. He lived up to the promise to be a father and also his vow not to love her in any capacity. The author had a family, a wife, two sons and he needed to be involved in family settings like church. It had been almost ten years since he attended church regularly and he knew immediately that this would be difficult. The moment he sat in the pew and saw Reverend Trotter preaching there was a pull on his spirit. He distinctively heard God say, "You will serve me or die." His response to this was to stay away from church so he would not hear the voice.

It was the summer of 1994 when his addiction became apparent. The author was playing basketball at Fernwood Park and he saw what he believed was a bag of cocaine on the court. He immediately scooped it up and stuffed it in his pants. To his surprise it was not cocaine but fifty bags of crack. He had never indulged in crack smoking. As a matter of fact, the only thing he did with cocaine was sprinkled it on marijuana or put it in a cigarette. The author viewed himself as

being sophisticated, an addict with principles and morals. After all he had a wife and kids and he went to church every now and then for God's sake.

The author's life became a living hell for the next year. His wife and family didn't understand how his life had spiraled out of control. He had transitioned from the bad boy, to the smart kid, to the future preacher, but somehow he had become a dope fiend. His family prayed constantly for God to do something and on March 9, 1985 God answered those prayers. The author went to church and at the end of the service he joined Sweet Holy Spirit with tears in his eyes and his family by his side. Bishop Trotter leaned over to hug him and he grabbed him as tight as he could and whispered in his ear that the Devil was trying to kill him. Bishop Trotter would later tell the author that he never forgot that moment and he would pray constantly for the author. That very next week was the worst week of the author's life; he did crack and drank everyday. This would be the last day that the author we ever use drugs and alcohol.

The author's point of clarity, his moment with God, didn't occur until two months later. He and his sister, Valerie,) were visiting the gravesite of his deceased father. Four years prior, his father summoned the siblings to his bedside because he was dying of brain cancer. After twenty years of abstinence his father just suddenly made a call. Because of the anger he had built up, he couldn't focus on his father's illness or care to see if he was well. Instead he wanted to simply curse him out. Valerie spoke to the author and asked, "You remember when we would always say that was your daddy. It was not because you all resemble each other but because we are the only two that have the same Daddy." The author learned that day that his eldest sister, Debra didn't have the same father, Johnny was adopted, and his eldest brother, Fred, was from his mother's first marriage. All the nights he had prayed to see his father, all the birthdays he missed, the graduations, the stories the author had to fabricate about fishing; if his father was

present he might have gone to Harvard and may not ever have turned to drugs. It was his father's fault that his life was in shambles.

They walked up the long flight of stairs to his father's apartment just five miles from where they were raised. When the author turned the corner and saw the face of his father, he immediately had a change of heart. He didn't want to hurt him, he didn't want to curse him, he just wanted to hug him and that is what he did. He embraced his father for the first time in twenty years.

It was a rainy Memorial Day, four years after his father's demise, and he was standing over his grave two months clean from drugs and alcohol. All the feelings and pain that were associated with growing up fatherless were expressed by the author at the gravesite. In the midst of his rampage the sun began to shine and, for the second time, God spoke. As he gazed at his father's tombstone, he saw his name, James Dukes. God said, "Your children will be looking down at your tombstone and asking the same questions, 'where were you' if you ever use dope again."

The author started going to Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and sharing his experiences, strength and hopes. He became a national speaker on the 12-Step Facilitation circuit. He was young, intelligent, articulate, funny, emotional and he knew God. Within four years, he was being asked to speak at major conventions around the world. The author has spoken in over eighty cities, twenty three states and four countries in regard to the God's grace as it relates to addiction. NA meetings became his spiritual base and his church. This gave him a reason to stay away from his true call. What greater work could there be then to tell addicts about the goodness of God?

Then on September 20, 2000, God did the unthinkable. His beloved mother died of lung cancer. The night she died he crawled into her hospital bed and slept with her until the morning. She was his pillar of strength, his prayer tower, his beacon of life, and the voice that continues to drive him to this day.

At her funeral, when Bishop Trotter did the eulogy, he said, "One of Virginia's children is marked to carry her legacy of teaching the Gospel. Who will step up and grab hold of the mantle?" Once again there were prophetic utterances invading his vulnerable moments.

After much prayer he decided it was time to accept the call on my life. God had given him five years of practice in speaking in NA conventions, in audiences that ranged from one to thousands. The author was sitting at his computer writing Bishop Trotter an email and his sister, Valerie, was at his side. She was trying to make sure he conveyed his calling correctly and then said she was cold. She went and grabbed his mother's old house coat and put it on. When she put her hands in the pockets she found a letter from his Mother which read: "Jimmy, I am so proud of you and your NA speaking, but God has a greater work for you. You were born standing up in my womb because you were called to preach. So do what God called you to and that is preaching the Gospel."

Ministry Preparation

It is the author's belief that there are distinct moments in life where God leads you to personal and spiritual reflection. These moments of clarity bridge life experiences with God's divine purpose. These moments, as a person matures, have greater value and instruction because the consequences of choice have softened their resistance to God's will and prepared them to actualize the intent of the creator. The totality of the writer's negative experiences has crafted a resume' for effective ministry as the lessons learned could be accredited to scripture: all things

are working together for his good (4). Equally as poignant were the things the author has done to further his development despite many errors, somehow what good intended has begun to emerge.

Bishop Trotter immediately placed him in ministry observation to learn and study the techniques, mannerisms and flow of church. The author took it upon himself to simultaneously enroll in McCormick Theological Seminary. The experience was awesome and life changing. The things that he encountered and learned in that diverse atmosphere opened his eyes to many of his flawed beliefs, especially as it related to white people. He found white people that were compassionate, radical and engaging without a hint of racism. They challenged him on every level: his thinking, his responses, his writings, his theology and his personal views. They pressed him to express his self without anger but with conviction and clarity, supported by evidence and not emotion. This was unheard of. He was from the streets, a product of the system that dumped him into a cemetery called Englewood to die with potential. Now, here he was, just a 15-minute bus ride from where he used to get high, having group discussions on the theology of Malcolm X, Augustine, and Neihbur in response to social justice in the community.

The author had arrived at the phase in the curriculum where each student had to complete their respective field studies. He was faced with a dilemma as he was so entrenched in the ministry of Sweet Holy Spirit where Bishop Trotter was the pastor that it was almost impossible for him to disengage and become an intern at another church for 9 months. The author was serving as Bishop Trotter's 1st Assistant, Lead Servant to the Men's Ministry, Community Liaison and Travel Adjutant to the Bishop. The author informed Joanne Lindstrom, the facilitator of Field Studies at McCormick, which he would have to complete his field study at Sweet Holy Spirit. Bishop Trotter would not hear of him leaving for such a long period because he needed him and had a genuine fear that he would not return. Joanne adamantly stated that never has a

student been allowed to complete their field studies at their resident church. She began to arrange interviews for the author with local churches that were interested in his spiritual resume. Bishop Trotter requested a special meeting and at that meeting a decision was reached that the author would be planted in a new community church. The church was to be designed and operated under the author's jurisdiction and with the author serving as a senior pastor. Needless to say, all that were in attendance were floored by the Bishop's decision and the seminary's approval. The author had become a pastor.

After eighteen months of tutelage and direction from Bishop Trotter, the decision to establish Liberation Christian Center as a church separate from the governance of Sweet Holy Spirit had been initiated. The charter, articles of incorporation, board of directors, by-laws, and bank accounts were all in place. The final decision was the locale of the church. What community? What people? What place?

The Community of Englewood

As God would have it a church building that had been previously sold was now available and the location was Englewood. God was sending the author back to the place where it had all started. This community that was in desperate need of hope, healing, leadership and direction. Englewood is a community in Chicago that is a leader in the dubious categories of crime, ex-offender returns, new HIV cases, and addiction.

Economics of Englewood

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Englewood community was largely defined by the Englewood Shopping Center, a large pedestrian mall. The city, social services, and mall management worked with community leaders and groups to integrate the mall with the community. The goal was to make the mall a vital part of the community, and a central part of

everyday life. It was the site of numerous community events, parades, outdoor concerts, live radio broadcasts and the like. This was spearheaded by the Englewood Business Men's Association and its director, Richard Drew. Mr. Drew died in 1978, and with his passing the Association lost its community focus. The lack of this economic base has lead to a decline in community responsibility and pride amongst Englewood residents.

In the 1980's the shopping center struggled as it lost almost all its anchor stores. Wieboldt's, Sears and others closed their doors or relocated elsewhere. It became a hodge-podge of smaller, specialty stores such as wig shops, clothing stores, shoe stores, grocery stores and the like. A large number of stores were Korean owned, and tensions were high in the area between Korean shop owners and local residents. A disproportionate number of stores were owned by those outside the community. This state of affairs left those in the community feeling disenfranchised. Most of the money that was being spent in the community was not invested in local business and infrastructure, leading to an ever downward spiraling economic base.

In 1999, this 30 year decline was finally addressed, when Mayor Richard M. Daley announced a \$256 million revitalization plan for the area. The keystone of the program was the relocation of Kennedy King College to the former site of the Englewood Shopping Center. Shortly, thereafter, the city began an aggressive buyout and relocation program for mall merchants.

Groundbreaking for the new location occurred on November 9, 2005. This marked the end of an era for the community, and the beginning of what many hope will be a rebirth. The 40 acre campus was completed in 2007. What many considered a blighted community was suddenly a hot spot. Homes that were impossible to sell 10 years ago for next to nothing are now selling for over \$200,000. Many believe that the area is still in dire need of improvement. The

infrastructure is crumbling, there is a decided lack of medical care available, crime is still among the highest in the state and community services are still lacking.

Criminality of Englewood

Recent statistics and analysis have indicated this trend to be the truth. The analysis of the 2004-2005 crime data proves the proposed relationships. In the higher crime rate districts, the population is composed of only 21.4% Caucasians and 66.3% African Americans, while in the lower crime rate districts the population is composed of 65.4% Caucasians and only 13.7% African Americans.

These ethnicity results are virtually opposites of each other for the high and low criminal activity districts. The average household income and average age is lower in the high crime rate districts having corresponding values of \$32, 641 and 31.8 years old while the low crime rate districts had an increased average household income of \$47, 628 and an average population age of 33.9 years old.

The relationship between the unemployment rate and the crime rate was also proven as the unemployment rate was 35.8% versus 6.4% in the high and low crime rate regions. Overall when the 2004-2005 Chicago crime data was analyzed all of the proposed relationships were proven with statistical evidence.

As of early 2007, the worst district for crime is number seven (7), Englewood, where over 700 murders have occurred in 10 years and where 120 registered sex offenders currently reside. Based on the fact the Englewood is the number one neighbor for the return of ex-offenders in Illinois, it is also believed to be a major contributor to crime in the community.

Sociopolitical Dynamics of Englewood

Of the more than 21,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Chicago, the fastest growing group is women, while African American and Latina rates are even higher, according to the Chicago Department of Public Health's (CDPH) most recent analysis in 2006. Catherine Christeller, director of the Chicago Women's AIDS Project, believes these facts are a "wake-up call" to Chicago women that the epidemic isn't over—especially for Chicago women. The public has long believed that common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like herpes, which cause open sores, are the gateway to more serious infections like HIV. But the study conducted by the Chicago Women's AIDS Project reminds women that they can be completely healthy, and contract the virus through sexual intercourse.⁴

Christeller states that others assume that the main risk among women is drug use. In 2006, however, only 66 Chicago women were infected through intravenous drug use compared to 239 through sex with men. Heterosexual intercourse accounted for 76 percent of new HIV cases in women, according to the CDPH report.⁵ According to the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, in 2008, 51% of individuals living with the HIV/AIDS virus were African American.⁶ The community of Englewood is amongst the top ten for individuals living with the disease and in the top five for women living with the disease. It is the author's contention that the social dynamics of an oppressed and hopeless community leads to a psychosis that disregards safety for one's self that when coupled with a desire to receive love creates a breeding ground for STIs. You may

⁴Northwestern University, "Even healthy women at risk for HIV, new research shows" by K. Aleisha Fetters, <http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=111139> (accessed February 12, 2009)

⁵ [Ibid.](#)

⁶ [Ibid.](#)

need to give us more than this to support this claim. What about other STIs? This section needs to be developed like the one below is.

Youth Violence in Englewood

Around noon on November 20, 1984, Benjamin Wilson, 17, the nation's No. 1-ranked high school player in basketball, inadvertently bumped into one of three youths outside a convenience store just blocks from Simeon High School in Englewood. Words were exchanged. Three shots were fired. Two pierced Wilson's aorta and liver. They operated. He died at 6 a.m. the next day. On November 21, 2009, a quarter-century will have passed since Wilson's death. And yet the memory of carrying flowers over to every Simeon player during an emotional pregame ceremony remains fresh. "It was surreal," says Steve Wool, now a history teacher and girl's varsity basketball coach at Evanston. "We were looking in the eyes of peers, knowing that someone our age had just been murdered. That put mortality into perspective." Wilson's death touched a nerve in Chicago and beyond, producing outrage and demands for street violence to end. Roughly 8,000 attended his wake in Simeon's gym two days after he died. The following day, 10,000 crammed into Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH headquarters, including the author, for Wilson's funeral. Jackson, Chicago Mayor at the time Harold Washington, and the world screamed for lessons to be learned from this waste.

It amazes the author that the life of this promising NBA star did not eradicate the thirst for blood or create a community of support that would include families, churches, community centers and elected officials to unify for the preservation of a generation. Instead, today, we have The Rev. Michael Pfleger, a nationally renowned pastor in Englewood, ordering the American flag at St. Sabina Church be hung upside-down -- a historic sign of distress -- to symbolize the growing death toll among the city's youngsters. So far in the school year of 2009 / 2010, 36

children and teens have been murdered -- more than one a week -- and Pfleger is among a chorus of weary Chicagoans who say the slayings aren't getting the attention they deserve. Had 36 kids died of swine flu this year, "there would be this great influx of resources that say, 'Let's stop this, let's deal with this,' " Pfleger said. Instead, because violence is driving the epidemic, "We're hiding it. We're ignoring it. We're denying the problems," he said. Pfleger is not the first Chicagoan to express the sentiment. In 2007, after the city had recorded 31 murdered children during the school year, Arne Duncan, then-CEO of Chicago Public Schools, expressed similar disappointment to no avail and with no responses. Duncan, who now serves as President Obama's Secretary of Education, said "all hell would break loose" if these killings took place in one of the metro area's upscale enclaves. "If that happened to one of Chicago's wealthiest suburbs -- and God forbid it ever did -- if it was a child being shot dead every two weeks in Hinsdale or Winnetka or Barrington, do you think the status quo would remain? There's no way it would," he said. Yet the problem has only worsened since Duncan publicly shared his observation. With about a month left in the school year, Chicago's Public Schools have topped the number of students slain in the 2007-2008 and 2006-2007 school years -- 27 and 31, respectively.⁷

The author must hold all accountable for the deaths of these young people. A problem that spans twenty five years, a problem that has robbed the futures of families, a problem that has been ignored by local politicians for the sake of votes and business, a problem that has created an attitude of indifference between generations and law enforcement. Who will become the voice of the slain and forgotten? Is there not a balm in Englewood?

⁷ CNN.crime, David Mattingly, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/05/08/chicago.children.slain/> (Accessed September 13, 2009).

Demographics of Englewood

The statistical data as of December 2007 unless indicated:

- Black population: 46,658
- White population: 286
 - American Indian population: 58
 - Asian population: 32
 - Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population: 10
- Median resident age: 28.5
 - Illinois median age: 34.7
- Average household size: 3.1 people
 - Illinois: 2.6 people
- Median household income (1999): \$19,718
 - Median household income in 2005: \$20,938
- Median household income in 2005: \$20,938
 - Illinois: \$50,260
- Residents with income below the poverty level in 1999: 42.1%
 - Illinois: 10.7%
- Residents with income below 50% of the poverty level in 1999: 22.9%
 - Illinois: 5.1%
- Houses and condos: 17,917
 - Renter-occupied apartments: 10,416
- Percentage of renters: 70%
 - Illinois: 33%

Familial Structure of Households in Englewood: 46,766

- In family households: 41,400 (3,443 male householders, 6,965 female householders)
- 3,084 spouses, 17,563 children (16,353 natural, 749 adopted, 461 stepchildren), 4,220 grandchildren, 1,511 brothers or sisters, 452 parents, 2,066 other relatives, 2,096 non-relatives

- In nonfamily households: 5,366 (1,991 male householders (1,708 living alone)), 2,574 female householders (2,291 living alone)), 801 nonrelatives
- In group quarters: 809 (458 institutionalized population)
- Size of family households: 2,705 2-persons, 2,503 3-persons, 1,903 4-persons, 1,439 5-persons, 792 6-persons, 1,066 7-or-more-persons.
- Size of nonfamily households: 3,999 1-person, 426 2-persons, 72 3-persons, 55 4-persons, 7 5-persons, 6 6-persons.
- 2,514 married couples with children.
- 9,370 single-parent households (938 men, 8,432 women).⁸

Englewood, where the median household income in 2005 was \$20,938 supporting an average family size of four. The author remembers his mother raising six children on one check and working all the overtime available to make sure we had a place to live. Englewood, where the median resident age is 28.5 and where the author as a young man with a family understood the feelings of hopelessness, despair and people counting on you to produce in an environment that was designed to help you self-destruct.

Where else would God send the author to further his ministry and establish Liberation Christian Center but Englewood? Anything else would have not been God.

Liberation Christian Center in Englewood

The multiple challenges and opportunities for ministry is the reason Liberation Christian Center (LCC) has its base of operations in Englewood. Under the divine tutelage of his spiritual father, Bishop Larry D. Trotter, the author founded and established Liberation Christian Center in November 2003. LCC began as a Thursday night bible study with 18 people in attendance

⁸ City- wide data, <http://www.city-data.com/forum/chicago/98420-how-safe-englewood.html>, (accessed July 2008).

and it quickly became one of the fastest growing churches in Chicago with over 750 members attending two services each Sunday.

LCC promotes a come-as-you-are model of ministry, encouraging all that their attendance is more crucial than their appearance. LCC caters to those individuals that would not normally fit into the “church” environment. At LCC ministry encounters those that have face or are encountering consequences relating to personal choices (i.e., drug usage, drug selling, incarceration, prostitution, and other negative vices). LCC prides itself on being a haven of recovery and restoration and its ministries are structured to encourage participation and rehabilitation. In alignment with the mission statement which states that LCC is *to be a catalyst between the sanctuary and the church* coupled with the charge by Jesus to his disciples in: *Matthew 25:42-45 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.* LCC would not be convicted of not serving the least of these.

LCC was welcomed to the community after just a month of service with the untimely death of two young ladies murdered in their living rooms by a stray bullet. These tragedies compelled the author and the church to action and to establish our social service entity, Liberated Inc.

It is the mission of Liberated Inc. to increase opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals and to become a positive influence in their transition into the community. Englewood is in the top five communities in the nation to which ex-offenders return. It is our mandate to

nurture these individuals into productive members of society. Liberated Inc. emphasizes the importance of healthy family relationships and assures these individuals that despite the bad choices of their parents that the children are given every opportunity to succeed.

Liberated Inc. has two government and state funded programs that assist in the objective of restoring family and community. The first, Monday Morning Men (3M), operates as a collective of African American men that have varied life experiences and vocations that have joined together to become a positive influence in the lives of young African American male students. 3M is utilized as an avenue for the elimination of any lingering psychosocial impediments that may have an adverse effect on a student's educational experience by being available for counseling and mentoring each Monday Morning of the school year.

It is the goal of 3M to mentor these young men from elementary school through high school and into colleges and universities. 3M encourages these young men to major in Early Childhood Development, Secondary Education and Guidance Counseling. These young men will become teachers, counselors and mentors for the next generation and will play essential roles in the development of the minds of our future.

Second, is the Englewood Family Reunification Program (EFR), which addresses the needs of families in the community through an integrated continuum of services from the unforeseen fallout of a confluence of social problems stemming from parental incarceration, drug addiction, mental illness, school failure and inadequate or inconsistent parenting, designed to identify, recruit, and enroll participants for project participation.

All services under this program promote positive family relationships, help formerly incarcerated parents learn skills to be active and involved parents encourage financial support, facilitate programs for families through community partnerships, and provide an arena where

children participate in special activities with their parents. EFR seeks to create among its participants an atmosphere where meaningful relationships between non-traditional families have the opportunity to grow and flourish.

It continues to be the vision of the author to merge the philosophy of liberation, community service and Christianity to advance the thought patterns of those that have been oppressed by sociopolitical ideologies. The community of Englewood is the “perfect storm” that awards the author the ability to intersect his childhood pains, his adult victories and his love of Christ into effective ministry beyond the church walls. As evidenced by the selection of the name of the church, Liberation Christian Center is embedded in the thought process of the character and passion of its leader. The Englewood community is in desperate need of a chorus of voices that will speak, march, protest and engage in civil disobedience to bring an attitude of change to the mindsets of politicians that control the resources that flow into the community. This can only be accomplished by touching a person, then a person touching a family, then a family touching a block, then a block touching a community and then a community touching a city. What better place for the nurturing of such a gentle touch then the hands of the church, Liberation Christian Center.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

This project's intent is to awaken the sociopolitical consciousness of the residents of the Englewood community that attend Liberation Christian Center. The lack of consistent involvement in the sociopolitical climate of the community has lead to the manifestation of many social ills that continue to plague generation after generation of Englewood residents. In order to effectively address these concerns and its relationship to the church as a conduit for change one must consider the following:

- Social Justice
- Christian Ethics
- The Politics of Christianity
- The Psychosocial Role of the Church and Community

Collectively these topics merge into a tapestry of freedom woven in the ideologies and concepts of God (theology and religion), community (sociology), human behavior (psychology and ethics) and how humanity governs itself (justice and politics) into a harmonious unit were all are viewed as children of God.

Social Justice

The prophet Amos wrote "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream," giving a biblical basis for the discussion that justice is somehow connected to the providence of God. Carl J. Friedrich in his writing *Transcendent Justice* quotes Plato's sentiments: he quotes Plato's sentiments of justice which are in stark contrast to the biblical view of justice. Plato in his mortal dialogue about the just has Socrates conclude that justice

(*diakaiosyne*) would be granted to be “properly having and doing what is one’s own- for oneself and one’s household.”¹ Plato speaks of justice as both a personal quality and a quality of acts and things.

Friedrich discusses the role of religion and its contributions to the formalization of national constitutions as the model for morality and justice. Friedrich position is that most nations establish a constitution as their method of justice and law regardless of the religion of the nation and its governmental motif. The constitution serves as the governing force that is supposed to clearly set the parameters for justice in that society. He argues that the core problems that engender so many tensions are the constitutions of particular nations which establish justice and how their justice defined. Was it by way of religion or philosophy?

In his chapter on “The Religious Foundation” he introduces the thought that the question of whether a persons, acts, or things can be adjudged “just” or more correctly speaking “righteous” (*dike* meaning right), can be answered only by him who has had the vision of the idea of good.² Hence justice must be judged by the original idea of what is good, because that person can know how far any particular person, act, or thing deviates or aligns with the original idea of justice.³ The author of the project finds this position quite interesting because it brings into focus the notion that justice can defined outside of the confines of biblical references and is dependent upon the interpretation of the person who originally defined or shaped the idea of justice in that particular society.

¹ Carl J. Friedrich, *Transcendent Justice / The Religious Dimension of Constitutionalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964).

² Ibid, 5.

³ Ibid.

Taking into consideration the thoughts of Plato that speaks of justice as being inclusive of doing for oneself and one's household not only is justice shaped by the original perception of justice but also the individual in conjunction with their respective household.

This ideology tremendously limits justice and calls for something or somebody to transcend justice. Friedrich writes the idea (*eidos*) of justice is a transcendent reality, something that exists beyond the testimony of senses.⁴ For Plato this transcendency calls for the seeker of wisdom (*philosophos*) who, when he has succeeded in his search and has become a knower, is only capable of ruling.⁵ The transcendent of justice according to Plato occurs when a person's search for philosophical wisdom positions the knower to be a ruler juxtapose to the author's contention that transcendency of justice is rooted in the conscious of the person and the path to that consciousness is religion via prophetic preaching. Once again this places the debate betwixt the concepts of theology and philosophy.

Iris Marion Young in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* broadens the idea of justice, in particular social justice, by defining injustice primarily in terms of oppression and domination.⁶ Young positions herself to add to the classical thoughts of John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* when he elaborates on the idea that justice is distributive and these concerns should be what some consider to be socially just with respect to the allocation of goods in a society.⁷ This inevitably leads to what he terms the social contract. What principles of justice would we agree to if we desired to cooperate with others, but would also

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.16.

⁷ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 1971), p.16.

prefer more of the benefits, and less of the burdens, associated with cooperation?⁸ Justice as fairness is thus offered to people who are neither saintly altruists nor greedy egoists.⁹ Human beings are, as Rawls puts it, both rational and reasonable. Because we are rational we have ends we want to achieve, but we are reasonable insofar as we are happy to achieve these ends together if we can, in accord with mutually acceptable regulative principles.¹⁰

Young's addition is that the scope of justice is not limited to distribution but includes all social processes that support or undermine oppression including culture.¹¹ Only changing the cultural habits themselves, will change the oppressions they produce and reinforce, yet change in cultural habits can only occur if individuals become aware of and change their individual habits.¹² This is a cultural revolution.¹³ The author is in complete agreement with the furtherance of Rawl's definition of justice not only to tap into the consciousness of the society as a whole to create a social contract that considers the needs and fairness of others. But a microscopic inquiry into the culture that produces images and stereotypes that feed the beast called oppression this scope must consider the awareness of the individual which inevitable changes the individual's habits which in turn changes a culture. Young further states "Culture is to a significant degree a matter of social choice; we can choose to change the elements of culture and to create new ones."¹⁴

⁸ Ibid, 28.

⁹ Ibid, 17.

¹⁰ Ibid, 29.

¹¹ Young, 30.

¹² Young, 31.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 49.

Sometimes such change can be facilitated by the passing of laws or establishing policies.¹⁵ These statements by Young lend to the author's ideas that social consciousness is a merging of individual awareness which leads to community awareness and must have political involvement to make lasting difference.

When one explores the consciousness of an individual to determine if there exist a connection between social justice,(the seeking of knowledge (philosophy) or God(theology) one must also explore what is the most effective portal on entrance to that consciousness. Timing is crucial in moments of great distress especially when you consider the longevity of chattel slavery, Jim Crow laws, and racism against African Americans. The central question is in whom this awakening in consciousness will manifest the oppressor or the oppressed. Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* states that "There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born."¹⁶ In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell.¹⁷

It is Fanon's contention that the black person has the ability to adjust and this ability to adjust will not allow them to reach a place where this upheaval must be birthed. Fanon proposes that there must be liberation from within for the person of color prior to a freedom from without. That liberation is the releasing of one self. The author is in complete agreement with Fanon that many balms have been used to soothe the pain of social injustice and oppression against people of color. The author would dare to step further and state that one of those balms has been religion and the promise of reward in heaven. Fanon also wrote

¹⁵ Ibid, 58.

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*. (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

¹⁷ Ibid, 10.

that "If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see that this transcendence is haunted by problems of love and understanding."¹⁸ The author continues to agree that when an individual's transcend their personal justice system that they must take love and understanding to whatever heights they reach. These were the sentiments of the prophet Dr. Martin Luther King when he wrote in *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."¹⁹

Christian Ethics

Cheryl Sanders in *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People* delves into what she calls the Christian moral sensibilities of African Americans. Sanders defines empowerment as the process by which an individual or group conveys to others the authority to act.²⁰ Although empowerment finds meaningful application in politics, economics, and social relations, in this discussion it is most highly valued as a spiritual transaction that both invokes and responds to the divine presence as mediated through human interaction.²¹ The author is in agreement with this perspective that individuals must be empowered to act socially with the driven force of divinity and it is the intent of this project to create the very action that is exemplified in this particular book.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Martin Luther King, *A Testament of Hope: Where Do We Go from Here* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1986). p. 578

²⁰ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People :A Path to African American Social Transformation*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p.4.

²¹ Ibid.

Sanders prescribes seven separate approaches to empowerment all independent of each other which are to be utilized for individuals or groups to move from victimization to one of moral agency within the contents of Christianity. They are as follows:

1. Testimony – personal accounts of religious conversion amongst slaves
2. Protest – the public outcry articulated by African American Christians on behalf of the oppressed.
3. Uplift – is the inwardly directed counterpart of protest, grounded in the intragroup social ethics that correspond to the demands for justice pointed toward the larger society.
4. Cooperation – what follows when individuals who have become aware of their victimized state attempt to join forces with other oppressed individuals and groups to develop strategies.
5. Achievement – where in efforts toward self-advancement become focused and morally meaningful for those who have affirmed their own humanity and respond critically to the evil within and without.
6. Remoralization – the self-directed transformation of persons who have been demoralized by oppressive forces operating in the society and within the psyche toward the end of enabling them to function as socially responsible moral agents.
7. Ministry – the church itself can be understood as the principal arena in which empowered individuals, families and communities can devote their gifts and resources to serving the needs of others.²²

Doing the Truth authored by James A. Pike describes ethics as the Christian responsibility to do what they believe. In the author's opinion ethics clearly differs from justice inasmuch as justice can be connected to the interpretation of the individual or the group that defines justice. Ethics according to Pike presupposes responsibility and responsibility presupposes freedom.²³ Those responsibilities are directly connected to the claim to be a Christian nothing more nothing less. These sentiments are aligned with the thoughts of Plato, Rawls, Young and Fanon that a core portion of awakening a sociopolitical consciousness of a person is create a sense of responsibility and the need to fulfill that responsibility because it is the mandate of God. Pike states that "whatever our theology and the ethical applications which

²² Ibid.

²³ James A. Pike, *Doing the Truth* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company Inc. 1955), p. 15.

flow from it, the matter does not end there.²⁴ No matter how strict or loose a man's ethics, there are times when he does not keep to the standards he purportedly has accepted. It is this author's view that it is between those two spectrums the ought (what should have been done) and the is (what was done) where you will find a portal of entrance into a person's conscience.

Burn In The Fire authored by Enoch G. Oglesby is a collection of case studies in Christian ethics. The cases are primarily drawn from the continent of Africa in many of the nations that have been infiltrated by colonialism and dictatorship. These cases were helpful in shedding tremendous light on the ecumenical and global perspective of ethics and the sense of responsibility for the coercive force for social change.

The Politics of Christianity

Obery M. Hendricks, Jr in *The Politics of Jesus* skillfully describes Jesus as a political revolutionist. His contention is that Jesus' life and ministry was primarily directed by political, social, and economic dynamics in what the author calls a "colonized Israel."²⁵ Hendricks makes a compelling case that Jesus' mission was to, at the very least, bring a psychosocial awareness to the plight of the poor and oppressed by liberating the "least of these" from the political constraints of the Roman Empire. Hendricks stated that an important goal of Jesus' ministry was to radically change the distribution of authority and power, goods and resources, so all people--- might have lives free of political repression, enforced hunger and poverty and undue security.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid, 26.

²⁵ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2006), p.5.

²⁶ Ibid.

This political dimension of Jesus, according to Hendricks, not only sought to address the symptoms of the people's suffering but also sought to alleviate the systematic causes of their suffering. These sentiments of the Hendricks are congruent with the author and align perfectly with the direction of this project; which is to cast Jesus and ultimately Christianity in a more aggressive light juxtapose to the meek, blue eyed, and submissive savior that has been the caricature of what most African Americans have become accustomed. Hendricks gives multiple examples of Jesus' radical statements and actions from his inaugural sermon (Luke 4:18-19) to his clearing the temple of money changers (Mark 11: 12-19). These scriptural references to Jesus ministry acts can be categorized as both prophetic (the sermon in Luke) and radically political (clearing the temple).

Additionally, Hendricks bridges the politics of Jesus context' to the political climate of the United States. He argues the office of the president somehow has been connected to the providence of God and that presidential policies, in particular Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush where guided those decisions.²⁷ It seems ironic to this author that it was under the policies of the two presidents that the poverty stricken, minority and disenfranchised individuals of this nation suffered more because of their policy decisions. Even in recent books such as *God and Ronald Reagan and Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quite Faith of Ronald Reagan and God and George W. Bush: A Spiritual Life*²⁸ writers claim that these men actions were align with the ministry of Jesus.

The Bible, Politics, and Democracy authored by Richard John Neuhaus is a collection of essays that address the varied dynamics of the intermingling of Christianity and politics in

²⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁸ Ibid, 192.

democratic societies. The contributors to the book stake various stances on political thought in relation to biblical obedience. In recent elections the influence of evangelism and the fundamentalist movement marched into the mainstream political process. It is the author's beliefs that these political pundits that utilized Christianity and the collective numbers of their congregations as potential allies and opponents to candidates have both positives and negatives dynamics. Where this land is dependent on the interpretation of what Christianity is and what is best for the greater good of all. We are bound by that interpretation.

J. Philip Wogman in *Christian Perspectives on Politics* opens with a profound statement "politics deal with real power, contributing either to justice and human well being or to injustice and inhumanity."²⁹ Wogman proceeds to answer some very thought provoking questions as it relates to the churches ability to remain politically autonomous and yet be an integral part of the community in which the church resides. He asked the questions:

1. Can Christians interact with non- Christians within the same civil society in such a way that the wider civil society is affirmed by all as a community of reference?³⁰
2. Are there values that can be held in common, on the basis of which political objectives can be defined and debate?³¹
3. Can Christians and non- Christians constitute an authentic community?³²

²⁹ J. Philip Wogman, *Christian Perspectives on Politics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p.vii.

³⁰ Ibid, 127.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

4. Or is such a society of pluralism of communities, interaction on the basis of group interests and mutual endeavors at conversion or proselytism, but not the basis of an affirmed commonality?³³

It is the author's belief that there most always exist clear and decisive demarcations between the community and the church. A working agenda must be established that can bring all to the same level of social responsibility based not entirely upon faith but upon a mutuality of care.

Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism authored by Kristen Deede Johnson contributes a unique glance into the notion of pluralism in conjunction with politics and theology. What makes Johnson's contribution unique is her inclusion of theories of the Bishop Augustine of Hippo as the theological foundation for what pluralism should entail today. Her primary question is how can we live together in the midst of our difference and she leans on Augustine to bring insight from the 4th Century to an issue that is relevant in the 21st Century. Augustine believes peace and harmony to be the most fundamental realities in direct opposition to the notions of post-Nitzschean political thought that see chaos and conflict as the predominating factors.³⁴ Augustine is equally aware of the ineradicable presence of lust for domination and power in our earthy *polis*³⁵. The author believes that the involvements of Augustine in the efforts to maintain harmonious communities where our diversities and differences do not interfere with our sociopolitical decisions are commendable. This clearly speaks volumes to the state of modern day thinkers and professors of faith not to be able to adequately adjust or address these social discrepancies in a pluralistic society.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Kristen Deede Johnson, *Theology, Political Theory, and Pluralism*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 140

³⁵ Ibid, 141.

Black Churches and Local Politics edited by R. Drew and Fredrick C. Harris explores the dynamics of the Black church's influence in local politics. The book elaborates on various cases whereas the church clearly demonstrates its ability to effect the mindset of the voters and to make a political stance as to whom was the most qualified person for elected office in that particular community. The book writers use elections in the cities of Atlanta, Miami, Buffalo, Columbus, Boston, Washington D.C., Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and Queens, NY.

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The Psychosocial Role of the Church and Community

The primary charge to the church is magnificently articulated in Martin Luther King's *Strength To Love*. The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and

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³⁷ Ibid.

never its tool.³⁸ If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.³⁹ The statements of Dr. King align with the thoughts of Jack Corbett and Elizabeth Smith coauthors of *Becoming A Prophetic Community* where they state the a church must be a church of “action”. An “action” church may express itself through social witness which may mean a group of church people going to a public trial or a hearing and expressing by their presence concern that justice be done.⁴⁰ An “action” church may express itself through social service and means to service the community outside the church.⁴¹ Thirdly, an “action” church may express itself through social change. Social change means engaging in an activity which gets at the root of the problem. It is much more difficult, for it means dealing with causes rather than results.⁴² The author is in agreement with the charge of Dr. King and the elements of action that need to occur in the local assembly to assure that a church goes beyond its wall and serves the community in which it resides.

Religion in the Lives of African Americans coauthored by Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters and Jeff Levin collects twenty years of empirical data as it relates to the role of the church in the lives of African Americans. One of the keys to the book is the extensive study and time dedicated to the gathering of data that allows the authors of the book to formulate thesis in areas of social, psychological and health concerns in relation to African Americans. One observation highlights the fact that black churches are closely associated with

³⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 64

³⁹ Jack Corbett and Elizabeth Smith. *Becoming A Prophetic Community*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980) p. 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 20.

black family life and through the church's teachings, belief systems and rituals, the two institutions maintain a cooperative relationship with one another.⁴³ The authors of the book summated that despite the importance of both family and church as sources of social support for African Americans, very little research investigates the collective assistance of both concurrently.⁴⁴ It is the attempt of this writer to indulge in such research and observe if the process of social change can begin in the church and permeate into the family through one of its members.

The Social Teaching of the Black Churches authored by Peter J. Paris seeks to expand on the ideation of Black Liberation Theology and delve into a concept called "The black Christian tradition." Paris describes the black Christian tradition as a modification of Christianity juxtapose to "Western" Christianity. The black Christian tradition has always been the source of inspiration for black churches in their persistent attempts to reveal the fundamental depths of racism.⁴⁵ Paris quotes Nathan Wright Jr. *Black Power and Urban Unrest*, whenever religion, politics and morality are isolated from one another, the tradition itself is severely threatened.⁴⁶ Paris concludes not only has the black Christian tradition been a normative for the black churches, it has also been the basic principle of meaning for the entire black community. This author is complete agreement with Paris' statements and would add that the community expects the black church to abide by these traditions at all times.

⁴³ Robert Joseph Taylor, Linda M. Chatters and Jeff Levin, *Religion in the Lives of African Americans* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), p. 142.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p.12.

⁴⁶ Nathan Wright Jr., *Black Power and Urban Unrest*. (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967), p.187.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

This project's intent is to awaken the sociopolitical consciousness of the residents of the Englewood community that attend Liberation Christian Center. The lack of consistent involvement in the sociopolitical climate of the community has lead to the manifestation of many social ills that continue to plague generation after generation of Englewood residents. In order to effectively address these concerns and its relationship to the church as a conduit for change one must consider the following:

- Social Justice
- Christian Ethics
- The Politics of Christianity
- The Psychosocial Role of the Church and Community

Collectively these topics merge into a tapestry of freedom woven in the ideologies and concepts of God (theology and religion), community (sociology), human behavior (psychology and ethics) and how humanity governs itself (justice and politics) into a harmonious unit were all are viewed as children of God.

Social Justice

The prophet Amos wrote "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream," giving a biblical basis for the discussion that justice is somehow connected to the providence of God. Carl J. Friedrich in his writing *Transcendent Justice* quotes Plato's sentiments: he quotes Plato's sentiments of justice which are in stark contrast to the biblical view of justice. Plato in his mortal dialogue about the just has Socrates conclude that justice

(*diakaiosyne*) would be granted to be “properly having and doing what is one’s own- for oneself and one’s household.”¹ Plato speaks of justice as both a personal quality and a quality of acts and things.

Friedrich discusses the role of religion and its contributions to the formalization of national constitutions as the model for morality and justice. Friedrich position is that most nations establish a constitution as their method of justice and law regardless of the religion of the nation and its governmental motif. The constitution serves as the governing force that is supposed to clearly set the parameters for justice in that society. He argues that the core problems that engender so many tensions are the constitutions of particular nations which establish justice and how their justice defined. Was it by way of religion or philosophy?

In his chapter on “The Religious Foundation” he introduces the thought that the question of whether a persons, acts, or things can be adjudged “just” or more correctly speaking “righteous” (*dike* meaning right), can be answered only by him who has had the vision of the idea of good.² Hence justice must be judged by the original idea of what is good, because that person can know how far any particular person, act, or thing deviates or aligns with the original idea of justice.³ The author of the project finds this position quite interesting because it brings into focus the notion that justice can defined outside of the confines of biblical references and is dependent upon the interpretation of the person who originally defined or shaped the idea of justice in that particular society.

¹ Carl J. Friedrich, *Transcendent Justice / The Religious Dimension of Constitutionalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964).

² Ibid, 5.

³ Ibid.

Taking into consideration the thoughts of Plato that speaks of justice as being inclusive of doing for oneself and one's household not only is justice shaped by the original perception of justice but also the individual in conjunction with their respective household.

This ideology tremendously limits justice and calls for something or somebody to transcend justice. Friedrich writes the idea (*eidos*) of justice is a transcendent reality, something that exists beyond the testimony of senses.⁴ For Plato this transcendency calls for the seeker of wisdom (*philosophos*) who, when he has succeeded in his search and has become a knower, is only capable of ruling.⁵ The transcendent of justice according to Plato occurs when a person's search for philosophical wisdom positions the knower to be a ruler juxtapose to the author's contention that transcendency of justice is rooted in the conscious of the person and the path to that consciousness is religion via prophetic preaching. Once again this places the debate betwixt the concepts of theology and philosophy.

Iris Marion Young in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* broadens the idea of justice, in particular social justice, by defining injustice primarily in terms of oppression and domination.⁶ Young positions herself to add to the classical thoughts of John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* when he elaborates on the idea that justice is distributive and these concerns should be what some consider to be socially just with respect to the allocation of goods in a society.⁷ This inevitably leads to what he terms the social contract. What principles of justice would we agree to if we desired to cooperate with others, but would also prefer more of the benefits, and

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.16.

⁷ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 1971), p.16.

less of the burdens, associated with cooperation?⁸ Justice as fairness is thus offered to people who are neither saintly altruists nor greedy egoists.⁹ Human beings are, as Rawls puts it, both rational and reasonable. Because we are rational we have ends we want to achieve, but we are reasonable insofar as we are happy to achieve these ends together if we can, in accord with mutually acceptable regulative principles.¹⁰

Young's addition is that the scope of justice is not limited to distribution but includes all social processes that support or undermine oppression including culture.¹¹ Only changing the cultural habits themselves, will change the oppressions they produce and reinforce, yet change in cultural habits can only occur if individuals become aware of and change their individual habits.¹² This is a cultural revolution.¹³ The author is in complete agreement with the furtherance of Rawl's definition of justice not only to tap into the consciousness of the society as a whole to create a social contract that considers the needs and fairness of others. But a microscopic inquiry into the culture that produces images and stereotypes that feed the beast called oppression this scope must consider the awareness of the individual which inevitable changes the individual's habits which in turn changes a culture. Young further states "Culture is to a significant degree a matter of social choice; we can choose to change the elements of culture and to create new ones."¹⁴

⁸ Ibid, 28.

⁹ Ibid, 17.

¹⁰ Ibid, 29.

¹¹ Young, 30.

¹² Young, 31.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 49.

Sometimes such change can be facilitated by the passing of laws or establishing policies.¹⁵ These statements by Young lend to the author's ideas that social consciousness is a merging of individual awareness which leads to community awareness and must have political involvement to make lasting difference.

When one explores the consciousness of an individual to determine if there exist a connection between social justice,(the seeking of knowledge (philosophy) or God(theology) one must also explore what is the most effective portal on entrance to that consciousness. Timing is crucial in moments of great distress especially when you consider the longevity of chattel slavery, Jim Crow laws, and racism against African Americans. The central question is in whom this awakening in consciousness will manifest the oppressor or the oppressed. Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* states that "There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born."¹⁶ In most cases, the black man lacks the advantage of being able to accomplish this descent into a real hell.¹⁷

It is Fanon's contention that the black person has the ability to adjust and this ability to adjust will not allow them to reach a place where this upheaval must be birthed. Fanon proposes that there must be liberation from within for the person of color prior to a freedom from without. That liberation is the releasing of one self. The author is in complete agreement with Fanon that many balms have been used to soothe the pain of social injustice and oppression against people of color. The author would dare to step further and state that one of those balms has been religion and the promise of reward in heaven. Fanon also wrote

¹⁵ Ibid, 58.

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*. (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

¹⁷ Ibid, 10.

that “If it is true that consciousness is a process of transcendence, we have to see that this transcendence is haunted by problems of love and understanding.”¹⁸ The author continues to agree that when an individual’s transcend their personal justice system that they must take love and understanding to whatever heights they reach. These were the sentiments of the prophet Dr. Martin Luther King when he wrote in *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, “Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.”¹⁹

Christian Ethics

Cheryl Sanders in *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People* delves into what she calls the Christian moral sensibilities of African Americans. Sanders defines empowerment as the process by which an individual or group conveys to others the authority to act.²⁰ Although empowerment finds meaningful application in politics, economics, and social relations, in this discussion it is most highly valued as a spiritual transaction that both invokes and responds to the divine presence as mediated through human interaction.²¹ The author is in agreement with this perspective that individuals must be empowered to act socially with the driven force of divinity and it is the intent of this project to create the very action that is exemplified in this particular book.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Martin Luther King, *A Testament of Hope: Where Do We Go from Here* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1986). p. 578

²⁰ Cheryl J. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People :A Path to African American Social Transformation*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p.4.

²¹ Ibid.

Sanders prescribes seven separate approaches to empowerment all independent of each other which are to be utilized for individuals or groups to move from victimization to one of moral agency within the contents of Christianity. They are as follows:

1. Testimony – personal accounts of religious conversion amongst slaves
2. Protest – the public outcry articulated by African American Christians on behalf of the oppressed.
3. Uplift – is the inwardly directed counterpart of protest, grounded in the intragroup social ethics that correspond to the demands for justice pointed toward the larger society.
4. Cooperation – what follows when individuals who have become aware of their victimized state attempt to join forces with other oppressed individuals and groups to develop strategies.
5. Achievement – where in efforts toward self-advancement become focused and morally meaningful for those who have affirmed their own humanity and respond critically to the evil within and without.
6. Remoralization – the self-directed transformation of persons who have been demoralized by oppressive forces operating in the society and within the psyche toward the end of enabling them to function as socially responsible moral agents.
7. Ministry – the church itself can be understood as the principal arena in which empowered individuals, families and communities can devote their gifts and resources to serving the needs of others.²²

Doing the Truth authored by James A. Pike describes ethics as the Christian responsibility to do what they believe. In the author's opinion ethics clearly differs from justice inasmuch as justice can be connected to the interpretation of the individual or the group that defines justice. Ethics according to Pike presupposes responsibility and responsibility presupposes freedom.²³ Those responsibilities are directly connected to the claim to be a Christian nothing more nothing less. These sentiments are aligned with the thoughts of Plato, Rawls, Young and Fanon that a core portion of awakening a sociopolitical consciousness of a person is create a sense of responsibility and the need to fulfill that responsibility because it is the mandate of God. Pike states that "whatever our theology and the ethical applications which

²² Ibid.

²³ James A. Pike, *Doing the Truth* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1955), p. 15.

flow from it, the matter does not end there.²⁴ No matter how strict or loose a man's ethics, there are times when he does not keep to the standards he purportedly has accepted. It is this author's view that it is between those two spectrums *the ought* (what should have been done) and *the is* (what was done) where you will find a portal of entrance into a person's conscience.

Burn In The Fire authored by Enoch G. Oglesby is a collection of case studies in Christian ethics. The cases are primarily drawn from the continent of Africa in many of the nations that have been infiltrated by colonialism and dictatorship. These cases were helpful in shedding tremendous light on the ecumenical and global perspective of ethics and the sense of responsibility for the coercive force for social change.

The Politics of Christianity

Obery M. Hendricks, Jr in *The Politics of Jesus* skillfully describes Jesus as a political revolutionist. His contention is that Jesus' life and ministry was primarily directed by political, social, and economic dynamics in what the author calls a "colonized Israel."²⁵ Hendricks makes a compelling that Jesus mission was to, at the very least, bring a psychosocial awareness to the plight of the poor and oppressed by liberating the "least of these" from the political constraints of the Roman Empire. Hendricks stated that an important goal of Jesus' ministry was to radically change the distribution of authority and power, goods and resources, so all people--- might have lives free of political repression, enforced hunger and poverty and undue security.²⁶

This political dimension of Jesus, according to Hendricks, not only sought to address the symptoms of eth people's suffering but also sought to alleviate the systematic causes of their

²⁴ Ibid, 26.

²⁵ Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., *The Politics of Jesus* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2006), p.5.

²⁶ Ibid.

suffering. These sentiments of the Hendricks are congruent with the author and align perfectly with the direction of this project; which is to cast Jesus and ultimately Christianity in a more aggressive light juxtapose to the meek, blue eyed, and submissive savior that has been the caricature of what most African Americans have become accustomed. Hendricks gives multiple examples of Jesus' radical statements and actions from his inaugural sermon (Luke 4:18-19) to his clearing the temple of money changers (Mark 11: 12-19). These scriptural references to Jesus ministry acts can be categorized as both prophetic (the sermon in Luke) and radically political (clearing the temple).

Additionally, Hendricks bridges the politics of Jesus context' to the political climate of the United States. He argues the office of the president somehow has been connected to the providence of God and that presidential policies, in particular Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush where guided those decisions.²⁷ It seems ironic to this author that it was under the policies of the two presidents that the poverty stricken, minority and disenfranchised individuals of this nation suffered more because of their policy decisions. Even in recent books such as *God and Ronald Reagan and Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quite Faith of Ronald Reagan and God and George W. Bush: A Spiritual Life*²⁸ writers claim that these men actions were align with the ministry of Jesus.

The Bible, Politics, and Democracy authored by Richard John Neuhaus is a collection of essays that address the varied dynamics of the intermingling of Christianity and politics in democratic societies. The contributors to the book stake various stances on political thought in

²⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁸ Ibid, 192.

relation to biblical obedience. In recent elections the influence of evangelism and the fundamentalist movement marched into the mainstream political process. It is the author's beliefs that these political pundits that utilized Christianity and the collective numbers of their congregations as potential allies and opponents to candidates have both positives and negatives dynamics. Where this land is dependent on the interpretation of what Christianity is and what is best for the greater good of all. We are bound by that interpretation.

J. Philip Wogman in *Christian Perspectives on Politics* opens with a profound statement "politics deal with real power, contributing either to justice and human well being or to injustice and inhumanity."²⁹ Wogman proceeds to answer some very thought provoking questions as it relates to the churches ability to remain politically autonomous and yet be an integral part of the community in which the church resides. He asked the questions:

1. Can Christians interact with non- Christians within the same civil society in such a way that the wider civil society is affirmed by all as a community of reference?³⁰
2. Are there values that can be held in common, on the basis of which political objectives can be defined and debate?³¹
3. Can Christians and non- Christians constitute an authentic community?³²

²⁹ J. Philip Wogman, *Christian Perspectives on Politics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. vii.

³⁰ Ibid, 127.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

4. Or is such a society of pluralism of communities, interaction on the basis of group interests and mutual endeavors at conversion or proselytism, but not the basis of an affirmed commonality?³³

It is the author's belief that there most always exist clear and decisive demarcations between the community and the church. A working agenda must be established that can bring all to the same level of social responsibility based not entirely upon faith but upon a mutuality of care.

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³⁹ Jack Corbett and Elizabeth Smith. *Becoming A Prophetic Community*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980) p. 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 20.

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⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p.12.

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CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

As Christians of the twenty first century living in a world of technology, capitalistic attitudes, global economy and amongst the “me first” generation; we must pause and ask a difficult but yet pertinent question, “Is Christianity relevant?” This question is disturbing to believers because the basis of their faith is tied to the relevance of Jesus birth, death and resurrection in conjunction with their lives. It is safe to say that Christianity has become, at least in theory, the underlying inspiration behind most of sociopolitical action in the United States. More political and social practices have been instituted on the basis of so-called interpretation of scriptures and theology. For instance, the justification of chattel slavery in the African Diaspora as being connected to the curse of Ham was a notion that was upheld for centuries.¹

The United States constitution, anthems, amendments and, even her currency, declares belief in God and this God is implied to be, at best, Christian and, at least, capitalist. After all in the first president’s own handwriting, he scribed that the constitution was completed in the “year of our Lord.” The assumption is that God belongs to America, and all Americans are Christians. If these sentiments bare truth then it could be concluded that Christianity is relevant as long as capitalistic ideologies are popular and the United States is the model of capitalism.

The question must be narrowed from Christianity to the church as an institution. In the twenty-first century, is the church relevant to the average American? Does the church represent any consistent influence on the moral, spiritual, political or social behaviors of its congregants or

¹ Jewish Origin of the Curse of Ham, <http://www.blacksandjews.com/CurseofHam.html>, (accessed December 12, 2008)

the community in which it exists? Does the church still serve as the center of the neighborhood where individuals seek refuge, guidance, social services, instruction and a sense of being in a beloved community? The question is mostly raised, because long has past the day where the church meant so much too so many people. This demise in the church's influence in the community is especially evident in the black church and community. The figure that made this medium of exchange between the church and congregation possible in most cases was the pastor / preacher who intertwined current events, slavery, history of the black persons struggle in America, and the prophetic promises of Jesus Christ's grace into sermons. This eclectic mixture made the black church the birthing place of so many sociopolitical movements of change:

- Nat Turner (dubbed The Prophet) preached bible lessons and led a successful slave revolt².
- Denmark Vesey co-founded a branch of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816 and organized a slave rebellion.³
- Richard Allen's was elected the first bishop of the AME Church. Allen had started as a Methodist preacher but wanted to establish a black congregation independent of white control. The AME church is the oldest denomination among independent African-American churches.⁴
- Wilberforce University, the first black school of higher learning owned and operated by African Americans, founded by the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Its president, Daniel A. Payne, became the first African American university president in the country.

² Kathleen Benson and Jim Haskins, *African American Religious Leaders Kindle Edition* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, 2008), p. 36.

³ Ibid, 38.

⁴ Ibid, 74.

- Montgomery Bus Boycott ignited by the arrest of Rosa Parks. The next morning at a church meeting led by the new Montgomery Improvement.
- Association head, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a citywide boycott of public transit was proposed to demand a fixed dividing line for the segregated sections of the buses. Such a line would have meant that if the white section of the bus was oversubscribed, whites would have to stand; blacks would not be forced to remit their seats to whites.
- March on Washington D.C. of 1968 lead by Dr. King and The Million Man March lead by Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam were heavily influenced and supported by the black church.
- Voter registration drives and the election of countless African Americans to various offices making many African Americans the first to be elected in their respective offices. (Shirley Chisholm, a Democrat from New York, is the first African-American woman elected to the House of Representatives; L. Douglas Wilder, a Democrat from Virginia, is the first African-American to be elected governor in the United States; Carol Moseley Braun, a Democrat from Illinois, is the first African-American woman elected to the Senate; and Barack Obama the first African-American to win the presidency, just to name a few.)

These shifts can all be attributed to the articulation and interpretation of scripture in which could be defined as the art of preaching.

Preaching

To further our discussion, the question must be raised, “What is preaching?” This concept that has been transliterated in the Hebrew Scriptures as *qara'*, to call unto or cry (for help); or in the Greek transliteration as *kēryssō*, used of the public proclamation of the gospel and matters

pertaining to it, made by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles and other Christian teachers.⁵ This calling unto God and to make public proclamation in regard to the gospel is the foundation of preaching defined. That preaching is directly connected to the word of God and should be exalted so that other may hear and become privy to the good news of the gospel.⁶

To paraphrase the prophet Jeremiah when he spoke of this need to proclaim God's word as fire shut up in his bones and I am weary trying to contain it (Jeremiah 20:9, KJV).⁷ It was Jesus Christ himself whom stood in the synagogue grab the Hebrew scriptures and proclaimed that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him and he was anointed to preach the gospel (Luke 4:18 KJV).

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans gave us even greater insight that he strives to preach the gospel (Romans 1:15). There is somehow an overwhelming burden to get out of oneself the deeds of God. These scriptural analyses have been incorporated into the mindsets of others in defining preaching: "Biblical preaching is still that unique method by which God through his chosen messenger reaches down into the human family and brings persons into fellowship with God."⁸ Probably the most famous definition of preaching is that of Phillips Brooks, 19th century preacher and writer, who defined "preaching" with simple eloquence in his lectures on preaching: "Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men."⁹

Preaching is the communication of truth by persons to persons in search of those truths. God could have formed the message in the clouds or framed the missive in the colors of the

⁵ Strong's Talking Greek and Hebrew Dictionary, p. 7121.

⁶ L. Susan Bond. *Contemporary African American Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), p. 8.

⁷ (All Bible citations are from the King James Version)

⁸ Lloyd M. Perry, *Biblical Preaching for Today's World*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), p. 19.

⁹ Ibid, 21

rainbow; God elected to spread the gospel through the flesh of humanity. Thus, though sermons may be printed, preaching never is; though words may be spoken by one person over the air waves and heard by another, without the unfiltered impact of personality on personality, true preaching does not occur. Paul recognized that some ministry can only be accomplished in person. Indeed, even the reading of an inspired letter could not substitute. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome" (Romans 1:15, KJV).¹⁰

Preaching is the communication of God's truth through God's person, filtered only through a genuine love. This love of God and his people is the inspiration underlying the truth that must be exhorted and proclaimed. This becomes the charge of the preacher to speak truth in the name of God's unconditional love and promises. The preacher becomes an interpreter and instructor to align himself with the word of God and, when this is done, that word becomes prophetic.

Prophetic Preaching

In the book *Sacred Art: Preaching and Theology in the African American Tradition*, Olin Moyd quotes Peter T. Forsyth who said, "The Christian preacher is not the successor of the Greek orator, but of the Hebrew prophet. The orator comes with inspiration the prophet comes with a revelation."¹¹ This revelation is what was demanded of a preacher in times of famine, grief, despair, slavery, oppression, political discord, unemployment and degradation. This would be incongruent with Walter Bruggeman's description of a prophet in *Pastor as Prophet* in which he describes the need for a destabilizing presence. The destabilizing effort of the prophets takes as its responsibility the attempt to counter the powerful forces of stabilization that are at work among the participants and benefactors of the social system. The prophets are not simply "angry

¹⁰ Ibid, 24

¹¹ Olin Moyd, *Sacred Art: Preaching and Theology in the African American Tradition* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1995), 68.

young men,” filled with righteous indignation who likes to “go off” on people.¹² But instead they have a grounded alternative reality to the current social order and, hence, a change is needed. The people of God desire to hear the prophetic word of God that can reveal unto them what is needed to change their current sociopolitical condition.

Prophetic preaching speaks to the ailments of the times and not just to the problems, but most offers a remedy of healing and restoration. It is unapologetic in its approach and confrontational to both the preacher and the hearer forever casting responsibility and accountability to the person saying and hearing what has been conveyed.

According to Dr. Otis Moss Jr., prophetic preaching is dangerous. Prophetic preaching can get you killed.¹³ Prophetic preaching is not necessarily safe, but it is saving. It will not keep you from being killed but it will keep you from being a killer. If we are to live our lives in the prophetic tradition, we must be prepared to struggle and in that struggle, we must be prepared to suffer.¹⁴ But when you have stood the storms of life and when you have been shaken, the ground around the roots of your life will be shaken, and when the ground is shaken, the roots will grow deeper and the limbs will grow wider and the top will grow taller and you become warm and better than you are.¹⁵

In spite of its abrasiveness, prophetic preaching gives hope of reconciliation and restoration. Prophetic preaching’s platforms are the annals of poverty, racism, despair and

¹² Earl E. Shelp and Ronald H. Sutherland. *Pastor as Prophet*. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985), p. 52.

¹³ Otis Moss on Prophetic Preaching, Conscience and Courage, <http://www.thebigdaddyweave.com/2008/01/otis-moss-on-prophetic-preaching-conscience-courage.html>, (accessed January 13, 2009).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

injustice. These aforementioned calamities have for centuries been the description of African American communities and, therefore, these communities became the natural inhabitant of prophetic preaching. It is this writer's belief that the mode of sociopolitical consciousness of the African American community, and in particular its households, that will continue the cry and fight for equality and justice is directly connected to prophetic preaching.

MINISTRY FOCUS

Englewood, with approximately 47,000 inhabitants (46,658 African American), and a median resident age of 28.5 is one of the Chicago's 77 official community areas of Chicago. It is located on the southwest side of Chicago, Illinois and is the neighborhood in which Liberation Christian Center is located. This should all be documented.

The Englewood community in the 1970's was largely defined by the Englewood Shopping Center, a large pedestrian mall. The city of Chicago, social services, and mall management worked with community leaders and groups to integrate the mall within the community. The goal was to make the mall a vital part of the community, and a central part of everyday life. It was the site of numerous community events, parades, outdoor concerts, live radio broadcasts and the like. This was spearheaded by the Englewood Business Men's Association and its Director, Richard Drew. Mr. Drew died 1978, and with his passing the Association lost its community focus. The lack of this economic based began a decline in community responsibility and pride amongst Englewood residents.¹⁶ You already said all of this. Why is it here as well. None of this info about Englewood should be here. You can reference it but not restate it!

¹⁶ City- wide data, <http://www.city-data.com/forum/chicago/98420-how-safe-englewood.html>, (accessed July 2008).

In the 1980's the shopping center struggled as it lost almost all its anchor stores. Wieboldt's, Sears and others closed their doors or relocated elsewhere. It became a hodge-podge of smaller, specialty stores such as wig shops, clothing stores, shoe stores, one grocery store and the like.

A large number of stores were Korean owned, and tensions were high in the area between Korean shop owners and local residents. Additionally, a disproportionate number of stores were owned by those outside the community. This state of affairs left those in the community feeling disenfranchised. Most of the money that was being spent in the community was not invested in local business and infrastructure, leading to an ever downward spiraling economic base. The economic demise of the community was a contributing factor to the increasing crime and need for social and economic reform in the community.¹⁷

As of early 2007, the worst district for crime is number seven, Englewood, where over 700 murders have occurred in the last 10 years, and 120 registered sex offenders are currently living. The statistics are staggering as it relates to crimes related to drug usage and domestic violence. With a poverty rate of 42% in comparison to the state of Illinois' 10% .accompanied by 28% unemployment rate the ethos of neighborhood has transferred from hope to despair. Many residents believe that their community has been deliberately abandoned and ignored because it is a predominately African American community.¹⁸

The trust factor in regard to elected officials being the voice of their issues is non-existent and is evident in voter turnout (26%) the lowest in Chicago and yet one of the largest

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

communities in the city.¹⁹ The problems of fractured households, unemployment, drugs, racism, crime and a political system with no voice has created a lack of sociopolitical consciousness in the community. The residents have become immune to the social injustices and have grown to accept this way of living with many giving up on an idea of a better tomorrow.

Englewood, with a median age of 28.5 but with a median head of household age of 67, is a community that is in a generation divide.²⁰ An older generation that has experienced the struggle and triumph of social change and a younger generation that has been reared in social injustice. In general, the family dynamic consists of an aging matriarch and two generations of children residing in the house; a head of household that is rooted in Christian beliefs and supports the African American church. On the opposite end of the spectrum are children and grandchildren that have not been convinced of the relevance of Mama's/Grandma's God or church. The absence of faith in God, or church, in the younger generation means they have limited exposure to prophetic preaching which could be the catalyst of sociopolitical change in their lives and thus their neighborhoods.

Liberation Christian Center, which consists of 65% Englewood residents who range in age from infancy to seniors, will serve as the entity to convey prophetic sermons to entice sociopolitical awareness and determine if the Black church can still be a relevant factor in the household and ultimately the community. This is in line with the premise that change in a community starts one house at a time and keeps in mind that the resources and chances of exposing the entire household to prophetic preaching are limited. Therefore it is imperative that

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

those that are exposed to prophetic preaching become the agents for change in their respective households by carrying the message from the sanctuary into the living room. Amen!

Effective measures must be taken to increase the likelihood that family members, regardless of age, will demonstrate the ability to inspire others within their households to become involved and make a difference in Englewood. The residents of Englewood must raise their voices against the social injustices in the church and bring those sentiments to the pastor so that the church can continue to be the vehicle that drives the issues to the forefront. It is the author's contention that many pastors have lost that connection to the community and must be informed of what sociopolitical issues that is relevant in the community in which the church resides because they do not live in those communities.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Old Testament Model

The Old Testament text is found in Joshua 24:15 (KJV):

And if it seems evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

The children of Israel are presented with a choice as to whom they will worship. The text suddenly shifts from the direct word of God to human preaching. According to the religious ideas of the period, entering a new country meant that the people placed themselves under the jurisdiction of new gods, abounding their traditional deities from those of the country.²¹ Joshua's sermon invitation contains no escape clause and no room for compromise: either you do as we have done and it is logical that you should do, because you have been witness of the marvelous

²¹ J. Alberto Soggin. *Joshua A Commentary* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1972), p.236.

works of God towards us and: or else you decide differently, in which case our relations are terminated.²²

As Joshua prepared the children of Israel for the land of Canaan he made it clear that his first priority went to those with whom he had immediate and direct control: he and his "house." Joshua "house" was his tribe Ephraim his immediate community. As concerned as Joshua was about the twelve tribes of Israel, he knew that he and his family must live by their faith in God, not Israel (the majority).²³ Joshua, the prophet / preacher, was the head of the house and dictated how his family would serve and worship God. It was a statement that was not challenged but proclaimed that the god his family would serve was not the gods of their fathers during their time of captivity. Joshua's family would serve the Lord that liberated, delivered and set free. His proclamation was an embracing of justice in the aftermath of slavery. It was emancipation from a religious system that was a part of the oppressive culture of the oppressor that dictated their social attitudes.

After all it was Joshua that stood by the tabernacle door as stated in Exodus 33:11 and listened to the direct impartation of God to the prophet Moses where God speaks to the man as his friend. Joshua bore witness to prophecy and experienced the prophetic sermons and ministry of Moses for 38 years and it was this exposure to prophetic preaching that Joshua took into his house and which ultimately had an influence on the family's behavior.

He was willing to stand by his faith against the greatest of odds to serve God. (Numbers 14: 6-10 KJV). Remember, he and Caleb were the only two of the spies who said that with God's help they could take the Promised Land. He moved with similar spiritual strength before Israel

²² Ibid.

²³ Expository Files 5.1 Joshua 24:15, <http://www.bible.ca/ef/expository-joshua-24-15.htm>, (accessed January 13, 2009).

when entering the Promised Land. It is clear that Joshua took the lead in his household. There was no outward timidity, hesitation, or question about his role in the family. Inwardly he may often have experienced excruciating agony. Yet, he moved forward with God's will realizing his first responsibility was for the leading of his family, then the nation. Of course, by viewing the leadership within his family, the nation viewed first hand the type of spiritual leadership they were being offered in Joshua.

This text exemplifies how the individual that had continued exposure to the prophetic utterances of Moses took the lead and responsibility in his house. On that day at Shechem, nearly 3,400 years ago, when elderly Joshua stood before his people and issued this call and challenge, he embodied both the call and the example. "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." As Joshua speaks, he is portrayed as a prophet like Moses, as arbiter of the covenant between God and Israel.²⁴ The people of Israel looked at the example of their leader. He had stepped forward and committed himself and his family. And his example, itself, was a challenge and encouragement for them to take a stand. One by one they decided to follow the Lord, too. "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods!" they called out from both the old and the young generations.

New Testament Model

New Testament text can be found in Philemon 1:8-16 (KJV):

*Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting,
9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you--being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ--*

10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains,

11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart,

13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for

²⁴ Jerome F.D. Creach. *Joshua Interpretation A Bible Commentary For Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2003), p. 118.

the gospel.

¹⁴ *But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.*

¹⁵ *For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever,*

¹⁶ *no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.*

The Pauline epistle to Philemon in its brevity possesses few interesting sociopolitical paradigms that are worth discussing and can serve as the foundation of this project. The core component of the epistle is the Apostle Paul's plea to Philemon for the freedom of Onesimus. An appeal (v.9) written by Paul's hand (v. 19) is the term of Paul's preference as opposed to a command. The tension of the pericope resides in the enslavement and liberation of Onesimus. Paul understands the sensitivity of the subject and he understands the necessity that liberation is granted to a runaway slave.

Philemon was a prosperous, bourgeois Christian citizen in the town of Colossae with a problem. His problem rested in what to do with this appeal from Paul and the aftermaths of his decisions. A core component of prophetic preaching is the reaction of the oppressor to the hearing of the truth. Jesus as the ultimate prophet / liberator by his own admission in Luke 4:16-19 (KJV): So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus as prophet / liberator had declared he was anointed to preach

the gospel to the poor; proclaim liberty to the captives and set la liberty those who are oppressed, all of which were Onesimus. A charge to liberate through ministry of Jesus and carried by Paul's missionary work and placed in the hands of Philemon to do what is perceived to be Christian behavior.

Philemon's problem consisted of the masters rights under law to punish a runaway slave. Paul never speaks directly to this but does mention his own imprisonment. Philemon could have seized Onesimus and have his throat cut as punishment.²⁵ Or more lenient alternatives He could grant Onesimus a pardon, and let him off with only a punitive mutilation (loss of hand, perhaps an eye or his ears) or possible a public flogging.²⁶ A final possibility would to give Onesimus his freedom. This posed the greatest dilemma because if he had made his brother a freed man, within a week every slave in the household would be seeking baptism and emancipation. This was a concern of slave owners in The South during chattel slavery of African Americans were they considered free after they were baptized. Then it would start in the houses of his friends and fellow Christian slave owners. A man would invite ruin and financial annihilation just by joining the church.²⁷ Philemon's Christianity created a larger socioeconomic concern in how was he going to respond to Paul's appeal. Paul address this concern in his advocacy on behalf of Onesimus by requesting that the treatment of Onesimus be an extension of how Paul himself would be treated "accepted him as you would me"(v.17). Interestingly this appeal is based on an assumed relationship between Paul and Philemon which he describes in (v.16a) as a

²⁵ James Tunstead Burtchaell, *Philemon's Problem: The Daily Dilemma of the Christian* (Chicago: ACTA Foundation, 1973), p. 4.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 5.

“partnership”. The Greek term used here *koinonon* can mean financial partnership and is taken to infer that Paul had some sort of business relationship with Philemon.²⁸

The perceived business relationship with Philemon gives Paul the ability to make such an appeal. Paul’s appeal boldly retracts Christian ethics and morality from consideration but it places Philemon in a place he must transcend his personal concerns for the sake of another based on social justice. Paul prophetically calls for this transcendence regardless of sociopolitical backlash and economic loss to Philemon but basis his appeal on Philemon’s love and faith in the Lord (v.5). Paul reassert (v.9) again that he is “a prisoner of Jesus Christ”, stressing that he was currently (now) in this state.²⁹ This contrasts Paul’s incarceration with Philemon’s freedom, at the same time adding additional weight to Paul’s rhetorical argument.

It is the very social order that inhibits Philemon from loving Onesimus as Christ has loved him.

Yet there is no social order, no revision of economy, no advance politics, no possible world situation that adequately conforms the gospel or even makes room for its full realization, no revolution that does not eventually redistribute injustice.³⁰ And it must then always be in a world that is flawed with blindness, greed, inequity, and dwell intentioned crime that Philemon lives.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Black theology is a theology of liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in light of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity.³¹ Black theology is a theology of

²⁸ Larry J. Kreitzer, *Philemon Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), p. 27.

²⁹ Burthcaell, .6

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ G.S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, *Black Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), p. 101

“blackness.” It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says no to the encroachment of white oppression.³²

This Black Liberation Theology maintains that African Americans must be liberated from multiple forms of bondage — social, political, economic and religious. This formulation views Christian theology as a theology of liberation -- "a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ," writes James Hal Cone. Black consciousness and the black experience of oppression orient black liberation theology -- one of victimization from oppression. This liberation involves empowerment and seeks the right of self-definition, self-affirmation and self-determination.³³

According to Black religion expert Jonathan Walton, "James Cone believed that the New Testament revealed Jesus as one who identified with those suffering under oppression, the socially marginalized and the cultural outcasts. And since the socially constructed categories of race in America (i.e., whiteness and blackness) had come to culturally signify dominance (whiteness) and oppression (blackness), from a theological perspective, Cone argued that Jesus reveals himself as black in order to disrupt and dismantle white oppression."³⁴

According to J. Deotis Roberts in *Liberation and Reconciliation*, liberation and reconciliation are the two main components of Black theology. Liberation is being defined as freedom in conjunction with reconciliation being attributed to be able to reconcile with the

³² Ibid.

³³ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 37.

³⁴ John Walton Webpage, http://www.jonathanlwalton.com/Site/Blog_and_Book_Reviews/Blog_and_Book_Reviews.html, (accessed January 14, 2009).

original intent or purpose of that freedom. Roberts' states freedom is the only salvation that the black church has to offer and freedom is the only hope of mankind.³⁵ The task of the black church and Black Theology is rethinking upon black religion as a religion of freedom. Black people must look again at what it means in their present. This is the place where the reconciliation must occur between those to poles past and present.

The description of Black Liberation Theology aligns with this writer's belief that God is concerned with the conditions and the liberation of the oppressed. Oppression can occur in many facets of life and methods of oppression are systematic in its approach to the act of oppressing. These nuances are embedded into the psyche of the oppressor and the behavior of the oppressed, both in what seems to be normal and in that which seems without the possibility for change. It is prophetic preaching about the power of a liberating Jesus that spearheads the social consciousness of the oppressed to cry out for justice and the same power of a liberating Jesus that makes the oppressor cognizant of their motives and need to seek restoration. The author agrees with this theology that views Jesus as both prophet and liberator to those that suffer from the aftermaths of oppressive tactics. Jesus viewed as have a similar social context as African Americans was illustrated in Dwight N. Hopkins book *Shoes That Fit Our Feet* in which he discusses W.E. B Dubois correlating Jesus' adult life with black suffering.

Yet Jesus Christ was a laborer and black men are laborers; He was poor and we are poor; He was despised of his fellow men and we are despised; He was persecuted and crucified, and we are mobbed and lynched. Hopkins discussed what constitutes a constructive Black Theology of today and how black theology has grown from the days of Wilmore, Cone, and Roberts to be inclusive of African American poor. He states the new purpose of black theology is to turn its

³⁵ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 16.

face to the signs of the times in the broader society and to what the church is or is not doing to uplift and empower those without means to enjoy life.³⁶

Preaching Black Liberation Theology

There is nothing that moves and inspires folks like a great as sermon therefore the contextual theology for liberation preaching is the congregation regardless of its socioeconomic status.³⁷ Understanding the magnitude and implication of his socioeconomic reality will enable the preacher of liberation theology to speak to the needs of people who have their backs against the wall. Today, in addition to theological training, the African American preacher needs to understand economics, history and political theory in order to address the many needs of the African American church.

The telos for preaching liberation is to rescue many in African American communities from the grip of dying a slow death, sometimes self-inflicted but more often than not accompanied by the endemic pathological disinterests of the wielders of power, influence and money.³⁸ This is why it is the author's contention that the prophetic voice in the pulpit is crucial to the heightening of awareness amongst the people to accomplish what James Cone describes as the preaching of the word must be the embodiment of freedom. Preaching and liberation theology must work incongruence to invade the mindsets and the spirits of both the exhorter and hearer of the word. Hence, prophetic preaching has the capacity to be dualistic in nature, affecting both the oppressed oppressor to stimulate a need to change and reconcile. Giving hope to both, that this new day of the Lord will be far greater than the latter

³⁶ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Shoes That Fit Our Feet: Sources For A Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 207.

³⁷ James H. Harris, *Preaching Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 50

³⁸ *Ibid*, 51.

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was one of the principal organizations of the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Its emergence occurred in April 1960 from student meetings led by Ella Baker held at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. SNCC played a major role in the sit-ins and freedom rides and a leading role in the 1963 March on Washington. SNCC's major contribution was its ability to organize voter registration drives all over the South, especially in Georgia and Mississippi with youth as the key component in spreading the need to register and vote. Registering to vote was both extremely difficult and dangerous, as blacks who attempted to register often lost their jobs and their homes. SNCC workers lived with local families and often the homes providing such hospitality were firebombed.³⁹

One of the ways in which SNCC was unusual among civil rights groups was the way in which decisions were made. Instead of "top down" control, as was the case with most organizations at that time, decisions in SNCC were made by consensus. Group meetings would be convened in which every participant could speak for as long as they wanted and the meeting would continue until everyone was in agreement with the decision. Since activities were often very dangerous, SNCC believed that everyone had to support the decision which was made, as the activity might end in, at best, prison, or at worst, death.

The Black Power Movement is a political slogan and a name for various associated ideologies with its roots in demonstrations and social consciousness of students. It is used in the movement among black people throughout the world, primarily those in the United States. Most prominent in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the movement emphasized racial pride and the

³⁹ Julian Bonds and Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954 – 1965* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1998), p. 168.

creation of black political and cultural institutions to nurture and promote black collective interests, advance black values, and secure black autonomy.

The earliest known usage of the term is found in a 1954 book by Richard Wright titled *Black Power*. The first use of the term in a political sense may have been by Robert F. Williams, an NAACP chapter president, writer, and publisher of the 1950s and 1960s. New York politician Adam Clayton Powell used the term on May 29, 1966 during a baccalaureate address at Howard University: "To demand these God-given rights is to seek black power."⁴⁰ This connection by Powell that God and black power were connected on a historical black campus created and atmosphere of inalienable rights for young African Americans. The mixture of sociopolitical consciousness and the hope of education generated a new voice in the African American household and community. The paradigm had shifted and it was the voices of young black children speaking power to truth and taking those messages into their respective households and communities.

SUMMARY

Many years of witnessing and living in deplorable conditions created an ethos of hopelessness and powerlessness in predominately African American Chicago communities. It is the desire of the author to engage in attempt to raise the sociopolitical consciousness of the members of Liberation Christian Center that reside in Englewood, a community that is fraught with households that have been splintered by drugs, violence, crime and unemployment. This neighborhood struggles with knowing how it feels to have a cry for justice and equality that has been silenced by fear but at the same time is ignited by a praying mother that believes in Jesus that cares and translates those beliefs to her household.

⁴⁰ Charles. Hamilton and Kwame Ture, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (London, 1992), p. 178.

There are biblical paradigms that support the notion that the most effect conduit to promote change in a household is the parent. But yet there are historical paradigms that support the notion that change can occur through the efforts of the youth. It will be interesting to discover if the prophetic preaching of the 21st century African American church will inspire the young or the old, or the best case scenario, both, to become the cry in the wilderness called Englewood.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The design of this action research project was to heighten the sociopolitical consciousness of congregants of Liberation Christian Center that reside in the Englewood community of Chicago. The author asserted that if congregants of Liberation Christian Center were exposed to prophetic preaching that address sociopolitical issues they would be motivated to become involved in community action.

Community action for the purpose of this model can be defined as embracing the theme of the prophetic sermon and doing any of the following:

1. Discussing its contents of the sermons ((or issues))with family members;
2. Addressing the concerns lifted to community leaders of elected officials;
3. Organize groups that would become agents of change by circulating letters, petitions or by leading public protest;
4. Identifying and locating local resources and services that will assist those who may suffer from the issue(s) raised and/or identify persons who may want to volunteer; or
5. Volunteer at local faith or community based organizations that aid those which suffer or are at risk to the issue discussed/raised.

These five requisites exemplify a person's ability to become involved in the sociopolitical affairs of the community. Each lends to the notion that the voice of the prophets encourages community action.

The qualitative research method was utilized because it encompasses the usage of focus groups, pre and post surveys, participant observation and allows the researcher the ability to observe results that are connected to behavior, attitudes and motivation. These elements were essential to determine if the author's contention would be measurable and plausible.

Intervention

The participants involved in the project met the following prerequisites: they were (a) Englewood residents for more than three years, (b) minimum family size of three which had to include either an adolescent or teen, and (c) regularly attended the 11:00 AM Sunday worship service. Eighteen congregants representing five families were chosen and placed into a focus group. For the purpose of this project the families will be referred to as Family 1 - Family 5. Each family was of African American descent.

Family 1 consisted of a two-parent household. The father (35) and mother (32) were married for three years with two children, a teen boy (16) and girl (6). Both parents were unemployed and the family was recipients of public aid living in Section 8 housing complex. Both children attend public school. The two parents were active participants in the project.

Family 2 consisted of an employed single mother (48) and three male children ages 23, 18, and 14. The two older siblings were unemployed and the fourteen year old attends public school. They reside in an apartment. The mother, the eighteen year old and the fourteen year old were active participants in the project.

Family 3 consisted of an employed grandmother (63); two daughters (42, 36); three grandchildren (male 24, female 19, and male 15); and a great granddaughter (1). Both daughters

were employed and none of the grandchildren were employed. The fifteen year attends public school and the nineteen year old is the mother of the great grand daughter. They reside in a house. The grandmother, both daughters, and the granddaughter were active participants in the project.

Family 4 consisted of an employed single father and his sixteen year old son whom attended public school. They resided in an apartment and both were active participants in the project.

Family 5 consisted of an employed couple living together, male (56) and female (48). They have six children three males (32, 26, and 22), three females (24, 17, and 16) and two grandsons (16, 8). The two female children (17, 16) and the two grandsons (16, 8) all attended public school. They resided in two flat apartment building accompany all floors. The couple, the three female children and the two grandsons were active participants in the project.

Prophetic sermons were crafted to include relevant issues that recently had a direct effect on the Englewood community. The subject matter of the sermons coincided with statistically data, historical prevalence, and communal knowledge of the residents. It is believed that each participant in this project had some exposure to the subject matter prior to the sermon either via personal experience, involvement by a family member or mass media.

Ministry modules (Appendices A-D) were formulated for the four issues that would be addressed during the project. The modules included the presentation of a sociopolitical issue or current event. The presentation consisted of the presenting sociopolitical topic or current event. The statistical data or the historicity of the issue in the community was not discussed or presented until to the end of the focus group discussion. This allowed the researcher to observe each of the focus group participant's knowledge of the subjects prior to their dialogue and pre-

survey testing on the subject matter. One of the project goals was for participants to be knowledgeable of community issues that may affect their families. Knowledge is regarded as a key component in the sociopolitical consciousness and uplift of an individual.

The modules would also include a prophetic sermon on the issue or current event, a post survey after the sermon, a second focus group after the sermon and an interview with a family member that was not present during the sermon delivery. The purpose of the post sermonic interview is to determine if the congregant was motivated to discuss the contents of the sermon with their respective family members. It should be noted that the focus group participants were unaware that a post sermonic interview would be conducted.

The following are synopsis of each module:

- Module 1 (Appendix A) – HIV/ AIDS Awareness - whereas Englewood has one of the fastest growing populations of young ladies ages thirteen to twenty one contracting the disease. The prophetic sermon was entitled “Coming Out Of The Closet.”
- Module 2 (Appendix B) – African American Male Incarceration - where as Englewood leads the state of Illinois and is number five in the nation in regard to individuals returning to a community after incarceration. The prophetic sermon was entitled “Pause To Pray.”
- Modules 3 (Appendix C) – Youth Killing and Violence - whereas thirty one Chicago Public School (CPS) children were murdered and another 150 victims of violence. The prophetic sermon was entitled “An Epidemic Of Disrespect.”
- Module 4 (Appendix D) – Disparaging Appropriation of Federal, State, and City Funds- whereas economic resources and funding for social programs that are earmarked for faith based and community based organizations have been given to larger organizations

instead of grassroots organizations in the community. The prophetic sermon was entitled “I Got A Made Up Mind”.

Research Design

This research was designed to promote sociopolitical awareness through prophetic preaching that would ultimately result in a call to participate in community action by hearers of the message. Within the model of ministry the intent of this project is to motivate the consciousness of congregants to become involved in issues and current events that directly affect their households and their communities.

The collective thoughts, action research, studies and opinions of individuals that have written and are deemed experts in the fields of social justice, Christian ethics, the politics of Christianity and the psychosocial role of the church and community coupled (Chapter 2) with the researcher’s experience have contributed to the goals that were formulated for the research design. The goals of the research design for the participants in particular and the congregation in general were:

1. Participants would grasp a general understanding of social justice and therefore injustice.
2. Create a sense of transcendency in individuals where they can become sensitive to issues that may affect their community but may not directly affect them personally.
3. Participants would become divinely empowered to respond to sociopolitical issues and current events.
4. Participants would gain an understanding of the role of the congregants in social action, Christianity and politics by way of critical reflection and transforming learning processes.¹

¹ Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development As Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 132.

5. Participants would view the church as the place that supports the collection of ideas and gifts to achieve a collective solution for the community in which it resides.

It is the researcher's belief that there is a direct correlation between the ability to achieve these goals and becoming involved in social action. Without grasping the goals of this project, participation in community action would not occur.

Since sociopolitical awareness is connected to prophetic preaching, the sermons become the crucial element to determine if awareness has been promoted. Therefore after each sermon a second survey and focus group was conducted to measure outcomes. The sermon itself was not evaluated but whether the key social issue or current event was understood by the hearer.

Measurement

There were two distinctive measurements that had to be assessed during the course of the project. The first measurement was to assess whether the goals for the participants were achieved and that was accomplished by:

- Comparing the pre and post test surveys
- Comparing pre sermonic focus group responses and participation to the post sermonic focus group responses and participation

The second measurement was to assess community action on behalf of the participant after their interaction with each ministry module.

- Interview non participating family members (Appendix E)
- Final participant interview and self reporting

Instrumentation

The pre-survey for each Ministry module was designed to determine how much prior knowledge of the issue or current event each person had before the focus group discussion. The

questions were developed based upon common references and recent media discussions on the topic.

The post-survey for each Ministry module was designed to determine how much knowledge was obtained by each person during the focus group discussion and to gauge the overall comprehension of the prophetic sermon them.

The questions for both the interview of non participating family members and the final interview of the participant were design to gain understanding on the effectiveness of the ministry model in relation to personal and familial awareness.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

This project was designed to develop a model of ministry that would heighten the sociopolitical consciousness of individuals that reside in the Englewood community of Chicago that attend Liberation Christian Center (LCC). The model was implemented through sermons as well as focus groups, surveys and interviews as evaluation tools. The long term objective was that individuals would be identified as the conduits for their respective families and become involved in issues that directly affect their health, education, and financial resources. The author proposed that this model of ministry would identify the primary person within the family structure whom would keep sociopolitical issues at the forefront of the family structure and thus the community.

The role of the researcher was that of facilitator, interviewer and observer. All of the Models of Ministry, surveys, interviews and sermons were designed and executed by the author. The author has been and continues to be actively involved in the sociopolitical climate of both LCC and Englewood and has participated in the following activities:

- Coordinated the 2006 Anti Violence March for Seritha Woods (slain at 13),
- President of The Golden Nugget Initiative,
- Obtaining over 250 Summer Youth Jobs Annually for Englewood Residents,
- Established LIBERATED, Inc. as the premier reentry program in the community which assist formerly incarcerated individuals transition back into the Englewood community by reunifying the family,
- Registered 2000 Voters,
- Gang Summit Organizer,

- Organize Monday Morning Men and Safe Passage Program with Chicago Public Schools,
- Hosted CAPS (Chicago Police Department)block President Breakfast
- Chicago Public School Uniform Pantry
- Coordinated Truancy Program with Teamwork Englewood
- Health Fairs for HIV/Aids, Prostate Cancer, and Hepatitis
- Coordinated Back To School Marches
- Active Participant in Citywide turn in gun campaign
- Advocate for the unfair treatment of Dr. Jeremiah Wright (Appendix F)
- Organized Englewood community residents to pass city ordinance to eliminate the sell of liquor in the 17th Ward
- Wrote editorial response to the conviction of the killer of Seritha Woods (Appendix G)
- Local School Council President

Data Collection

The process of data collection began by trying to identify which members of LCC resided in Englewood. Pulpit announcements, an email and a review of the church members log were conducted to solicit volunteers. All Englewood residents were asked to participate in a six week process that would involve regular church attendance, focus groups participation before and after 11:00 AM Sunday morning church service, complete survey, and assurance of family participation. Eighteen congregants, representing five families were chosen and placed into a focus group.

On the first Sunday of the project the participants gathered in the Deonte Room of the church and were greeted by the researcher/facilitator. A brief orientation was conducted to reiterate the requirements for involvement in the project and how thankful the researcher was for

their time and commitment. The first Module of Ministry topic introduced was HIV/AIDS. Each participant was given fifteen minutes to complete a pre- survey. Following the survey, a group dialogue on the topic began. Participants were encouraged to speak freely in regards to the topic, from whatever perspective they wish. After 45 minutes of dialogue the facilitator brought the conversation to a close. The participants then received a 15 minute presentation on HIV/AIDS which included recent statistics of contraction germane to Englewood, African Americans as a whole, teenagers, and women. In addition economic information was given as it relates to the cost of prescription medication and how much each HIV patient would spend over the course of their lifetime. Participants were dismissed and all attended the worship service.

Upon completion of the focus group, a prophetic sermon was delivered on the topic all participants reconvened in the Deonte Room. The participants immediately began to discuss the sermon in relation to their previous dialogue and information that was given them. This level of engagement was a surprise to the researcher because he was prepared to facilitate the conversation. The researcher/facilitator observed and noted the conversation without interruption. After 30 minutes of dialogue the conversation was brought to a close and post survey was distributed for completion.

The second Sunday the process proceeded in the same manner as the first week. The exception was the subject African American Male Incarceration was introduced as the second Module of Ministry. After the pre-survey, 45 minutes of dialogue the facilitator brought the conversation to a close. The participants then received a 15 minute presentation on African American male incarceration which included recent statistics germane to Englewood, African American males nationally, and youth incarceration. Comparisons were presented (1) imprisoned inmates in comparison to a college education, (2) locale of prisons urban or rural, (3)

employment rates associated with incarceration in those locales, and (4) recidivism rate differences of African Americans and Whites. In addition, information was given about the discrepancy in sentencing between individuals that sell cocaine and crack cocaine. Participants were dismissed and all attended worship service.

Upon completion of the focus group, a prophetic sermon was delivered on the topic all participants reconvened in the Deonte Room. The participants immediately began to discuss the sermon in relation to their previous dialogue and information that was given them. The researcher observed a different dynamic among the group from the previous gathering. The families began to have family discussions by beginning their dialogue with statements such as “in our family,” “we,” or “when our uncle was in jail.” The researcher/facilitator observed and noted the conversation without interruption. After 30 minutes of dialogue the conversation was brought to a close and post-survey was distributed. The researcher observed during the post-survey family members was asking one another questions in order to uniform their responses. During the first topic discussion about HIV/AIDS awareness which was more independent and personal.

The third Module of Ministry, Youth Killings and Violence, proceeded in the same manner as the previous meetings. After 45 minutes of dialogue the facilitator brought the conversation to a close. Once again this topic seemed to draw families together and the youth participants were more vocal and lead the conversation. The participants then received a 15 minute presentation of Chicago Public School students that have been murdered since 1986. Additional information was given in regard to history of LCC’s involvement and lack of involvement with the Board of Education. Additional information was discussed on the media

coverage of the recent killings as well as statistical data on graduation rates in comparison to incarceration. Participants were dismissed and all attended the worship service.

Upon completion of the focus group, a sermon in which a prophetic sermon was delivered, all participants reconvened in the Deonte Room. It should be noted that the researcher/facilitator during the sermon began to organize a youth march against the recent rash of violence amidst CPS students in particular the recent stomping death of Derrion Albert. This atrocity had been broadcasted nationally in conjunction Chicago's 2016 Olympic bid. Many believe that Derrion's death was being minimized to paint a picture of euphoria in the community to secure the bid. The researcher had received phone threats of the possible closing of the church if the march was to convene. Just as in prior settings the participants immediately began to discuss the topic.

The researcher observed that the group dynamic had shifted to more of a debate between the older members and the youth of the group. The core concern was what role the youth play in the violence they may experience. The researcher/facilitator observed and noted the conversation without interruption. After 30 minutes of dialogue the researcher/facilitator tried to bring the conversation to a close and distribute the post-survey. It was unsuccessful to say the least. The debate proceeded an hour and half with the researcher facilitating the debate on the next action that needs to take place within the community. Some of the suggestions were school boycotts, parent patrol, youth marches, or a public demonstration at city hall. The group convened with the promise to organize a task force to address this issue. The post-survey was distributed but the majority of the responses were not in relation to the questions, instead personal statements of disgust.

The fourth Sunday the process proceeded in the same manner focusing on the subject Disparaging Appropriation of Federal, State, and City Funding as the fourth Module of Ministry. After 45 minutes of dialogue the facilitator brought the conversation to a close. The researcher observed this topic lacked the fervor of the previous three. Often during the dialogue he had to coach the conversation to create momentum and interest. The participants then received a 15 minute presentation of the funding practices in association with state and city grants. The connection between political favor and the rewarding of the grants was present in conjunction with the discrepancy of amount of awards to African American communities to their white affluent counterparts. Participants were dismissed and all attended the worship service.

Upon completion of the focus group, a prophetic sermon was delivered on the topic all participants reconvened in the Deonte Room. It should be noted that the researcher/facilitator lead a protest against the funding practices of the CPS during the week previous to the sermon. Six of the group participants were involved in the protest. They began the group discussion detailing the events of the protest and how that relates to the topic. The youth in the group showed little or no interest in the topic. The researcher/facilitator observed and noted the conversation without interruption. After 30 minutes of dialogue the conversation was brought to a close and post survey was distributed for completion.

The researcher/facilitator thanked everyone for their involvement, encouraged them to complete the formulation of the task force and requested that they provide contact information of a family member in their household that had not attended the last four services. The contact information was retrieved and phone interviews were established with those families' members that were not in attendance. The phone interviews took place the following week with the sole purpose of determining which family member, if any, brought the topic discussion into the home.

Analysis of Data

In analyzing the data from all the Modules of Ministry which were collected they must be divided into three distinctive groups: Pre and Post Surveys, Focus group observations and Interviews. Percentiles were calculated based on the frequency of common answers.

Ministry Module 1- HIV AIDS Awareness:

Pre and Post Surveys

1. Do you consider yourself socially aware? 98% stated yes
2. Do you consider yourself politically aware? 86% stated yes
3. Who would be the person in your family that has the most social awareness? 100% stated themselves.
4. Who would be the person in your family that has the most political awareness?
5. 83% stated the eldest person in the family. 73% of those were women.
6. What is the major social issue of Englewood? 95% listed at least two.
Listed in frequency: Violence, Drugs, Education, Unemployment, and Housing
7. What is the major political issue in Englewood? Listed in frequency: Crime, Unemployment and Education
8. What is the major political issue in Englewood?
Listed in frequency: Healthcare, Education, Unemployment
9. What shapes your social views?
Listed in frequency: Community, God, Themselves
10. What shapes your political views?
Listed in frequency: Community, Bishop Dukes, President Obama
11. Have you ever been a social campaign? 6% stated yes
12. Have you ever been involved in political campaign? 11% stated yes
13. Name the person in your family that strongly effects your actions.
94 % named a family member that does not reside with them. One participant named Bishop Dukes her uncle.
14. Has a person in your family contracted or died from HIV/AIDS? 67% said yes
15. Have you ever been tested for HIV/AIDS? 72% stated yes
16. Are you aware of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Englewood? 72% stated no
17. Do you know the fastest growing population of new HIV cases?
Listed in frequency: Pre survey: 72% stated gay black men, 18% stated women. Post Survey: 100% stated African American teenage girls
Do you feel you should personally do something about the spread of HIV/AIDS? Pre survey: 56% said yes. Post survey: 78% said yes
18. If you believe you should do something about the spread of HIV/AIDS. What could that be? Pre survey: Of the 56% that stated yes 80% stated get more information and 20% stated get involved in testing. Post survey: Of the 78% that stated yes 93% get involved in testing

19. Would you consider HIV/AIDS a social or a political issue? Pre survey: 83% stated social, 11% stated political and 6% stated both. Post survey: 17% stated social, 17% stated political and 66% stated both
20. Would you consider HIV/AIDS a Christian issue? Pre survey: 83% stated yes Post survey: Same 83% stated yes

The second manner in which data was collected was based on observations from the focus group discussions. The pre sermonic Ministry Module 1 focus group dynamics were more aligned to an independent conversation between colleagues. There was no indication that a group of families were having a discussion on HIV/AIDS or sex. The topic generated the stereotypical conversation in regards to HIV/AIDS, that it was male homosexual concern. There where no discussion as it being a social, political, community or Christian concern. Also, neither testing nor condoms were discussed as a deterrent to the spread of the disease.

The post sermonic focus group discussion centered on the economic gains of the pharmaceutical companies as it relates to providing medication fro HIV/AIDS patients. The Majority of the participants agreed that it seemed as if a conspiracy was in place to assure the contracted of disease at an early age to maintain profits for major organizations. The researcher/facilitator mentioned the relationship between pharmaceutical profits and new cases in both the informational presentation and his sermonic presentation.

Module 2 - African American Male Incarceration Ministry

Pre and Post Test Responses

(It should be noted again all participants are African American)

1. Have you or a family member ever been incarcerated? 89% stated yes
2. Are you or the family member that has been incarcerated a male? 100% of the 89% stated yes. Of those that have been incarcerated what is the highest grade level they achieved prior to incarceration. Listed in frequency: 8th grade or lower, High School graduate of lower, none stated college
3. Does that individual reside in your home now? 22% stated yes

4. Do you have any family members employed by the Department of Corrections or Cook County Sheriff's Office? 100% said no
5. Is the person that was incarcerated currently employed? 100% stated no
6. Do you believe that it is designed by the government or big business to incarcerate African American males? Pre survey: 100% stated yes; Post survey: No change
7. Would you consider African American male incarceration a social issue? Pre survey: 100% stated yes Post survey: No change
8. Would you consider African American male incarceration a political issue? Pre survey: 82% stated yes. Post survey: 89% stated yes
9. Would you consider African American male incarceration a Christian issue? Pre survey: 33% stated yes. Post survey: 78% stated yes.
10. What do you think should be done about the issue? Listed in frequency: Laws need to be change and more jobs for people.

The pre sermonic Ministry Module 2 focus group dynamics shifted towards family. It was during this module that the researcher/facilitator first observed familial presence within the discussions. Participants seem to come together or have a family member speak on behave of the family to the group. The post sermonic focus group discussion centered on the economic gains associated with the incarceration of African Americans. Equal amount of the discussion was dedicated to the locale of the prisons in rural Illinois and the jobs that are connected to the prison. The researcher/facilitator mentioned the relationship between prison locale and employment in both the informational presentation and his sermon.

Ministry Module 3 - Youth Killings and Violence

Pre and Post Test Responses

1. How have the Chicago Public School killings effective you? Listed in frequency: Saddens or Hurts me, Safety concerns, Want to move, and pray
2. Do you or did you attend a Chicago Public School? 78%
3. Do you have children that attend Chicago Public School? 8 of the 18 participants attend Chicago Public School
4. What is your biggest concern as it relates to your children's future? Of the 18 participants 10 had children. Listed in frequency: Safety and Violence, Education, and Employment
5. What would you suggest as a solution the killings? Listed in frequency: Employment and Counseling
6. Have you ever been a victim of a violent act / domestic violence? It should be noted the researcher/facilitator told the participants that he was obligated by law to report in domestic violence involving youth. 22% stated yes

7. What is your overall sentiment of the killings? Listed in frequency: Senseless and When will it stop
8. How do you feel after the sermon? Listed in frequency: Anger or rage
9. What part of the sermon that you most closely identify? Listed in frequency: Black people are being disrespected, Our children need to heard, and a call to action
10. What will you personally do since you heard the sermon? Listed in frequency: Follow Bishop Dukes, Stand up and volunteer
11. Will you carry this message into your home and community? 100% stated yes

The pre sermonic Ministry Module 3 focus group dynamics centered on the senselessness and the pain associated with the killings. The overall tone of the discussion was sadness. The post sermonic focus group discussion was the most heated and longest of them all. The group dynamic was shifted towards the role of youth in the violence they experienced. A great of discussion centered on the comparison of “ol’ school” and “new school,” which speaks directly to the apparent generation gap that was present throughout the conversation. The participants decided that a task force should be formulated and would lead that effort.

Ministry Module 4 - Disparaging Appropriation of Federal, State, and City Funding

Pre and Post Test Responses

1. What do you feel is the most needed resource in Englewood? Listed in frequency: Employment, Drug Rehabilitation and Housing
2. Do you feel there are adequate social service resources in Englewood? Pre survey: 33% stated yes; Post survey: 11%
3. Do you know how social services are funded? Pre survey: 33% stated yes; Post survey: 89% stated yes
4. Do you consider social services agency as possible opportunity for employment? Pre survey: 11% stated yes; Post survey: 38% stated yes
5. Do you feel more affluent communities have more social service resources? Pre survey: 89% stated yes; Post survey: 94% stated yes
6. Whose responsibility is it to assure that a community gets adequate social services? Pre survey: 77% gave no answer and 11% people in the community; Post survey: 83% politicians
7. Have you sought assistance from a social service agency in Englewood? 56% stated yes
8. Do you know the definition of a social service agency? 72% stated yes
9. Define it. Listed in frequency: People that help poor people and organizations that don’t make money
10. Did the sermon help you gain a better understanding of the role of the church in social services? 89% stated yes

The pre sermonic Ministry Module 4 focus group dynamics was the most disengaged of all four. The researcher/facilitator observed very little discussion in regards to the topic. The dialogue centered on the Ministry Module 3 topic Youth Killings and Violence and the focus group had to be redirected to the topic at hand. The post sermonic focus group discussion still lacked the intensity of the previous groups.

The third manner in which data was collected was the interviews with the families' members that were not in attendance which yielded the following outcomes: five representatives, one from each family were interviewed.

1. When asked did any of their family members that attended LCC in the last four weeks return after church and discuss the sermon contents. 100% stated yes
2. When asked what topic was discussed. Listed in frequency: Youth Killings and Violence, African American Male, Incarceration and HIV/AIDS Awareness
3. When asked which family member started the discussion, it was dependent on the subject. The topic was generally started by the family member that was more closely associated with the subject. For example the youth begin the discussion when it concerned Youth Killings and Violence.

These interviews were very informal but yielded tremendous insight into the effectiveness of each module. The family members interviewed primarily began the conversation with how much influence the pastor and the sermons had on their respective family members. The sermonic presentation and its contents is what began the familial discussion followed by the focus groups discussion and the presentation.

Outcome

The author believes that the data contributed evidence to multiple assumptions. The assumption is that the pastor of the church is influential in the decision making process and instrumental in the formation of thoughts amongst his/her congregants. This assumption was proven to be true because after every Module of Ministry presentation or prophetic sermon it clearly demonstrates a change in attitude and a proposed change in behavior by the participants. Specifically in the case of Module of Ministry 3 Youth Killings and Violence, there were two distinctive indicators that the pastor's influence is apparent in cognitive behavior of the participants. The participants prior to the information presentation and sermon had demonstrated a sense of sadness in regard the youth killings. After hearing the sermon that demeanor was changed to anger and rage. The second example in the same module was when the participants were asked "what will you do" the majority response was to follow the direction of the pastor. A third example can be found in Module of Ministry 1 HIV/AIDS Awareness when participants were asked "what shapes your political views" the second most frequent response was the pastor. These findings are incongruence with the author's belief that the conscious of LCC congregants' was directly linked to the pastor's sociopolitical agenda.

The next assumption was two-fold the role of the church and its members as agents for change was not one that was properly understood or practiced by LCC congregants. As well as, it was the author's contention that LCC members that resided in Englewood where not involved with sociopolitical issues outside of the church. Furthermore their sociopolitical conscience was not congruent with their community or respective households. The participants displayed the tendency to follow the group as opposed to their family members that resided with them. This assumption was substantiated by the responses received in Ministry Module 1 when the

participants were asked these questions “Have you ever been in a social campaign?” and “Have you ever been in a political campaign?” The responses to these questions netted a combined percentage of only 8%, which constitutes 1 out of 18 have been involved in either a social or political campaign aligns with the theory that they are not sociopolitical aware and very much inactive in the community. Addition when the participants were asked “Name a family member that strongly affects your actions.” Ninety four percent (17 of 18) of the participants named an individual that did not reside in the household. This displays the lack of communication and trust within the familial dynamic.

A very important concern was addressed in the research outcomes was the question of the relevancy of the African American church in the community. In particular was the so called black church still the conduit for sociopolitical change in the community which had been its staple in the early portions of the 20th century. that had been This was a major concern of the author’s to determine if indeed sociopolitical issues still could be exalted from a prophetic pulpit and yield communal results. The relevancy of the church was clearly answered by the participant’s reliance on the church for guidance in both social and especially political issues.

Further outcomes of the data findings yielded that primary interests of the group were their family safety, family health, family incarceration, and economical issues. This would lead one to believe that the family was the core of the community. The least concerns of the families were social services and the dynamics of politics. This further exemplifies that the participants lacked sociopolitical awareness as it relates to themselves, family and community. This can be contributed to them not understanding the correlation between the distribution of resources, political power and social justice.

The participants did demonstrate instances of community action by becoming involved in two public campaigns against social injustice. A Youth March “Bringing The “Neighbor” Back Into Hood” was orchestrated with the help of the youth participants in the project model. They were instrumental in the formation, programming, recruiting, and the marketing of the event. The second campaign was the CPS board protest in regard to the spending of economic stimulus money for mentors. Participants of the group attended the protest and expressed their concerns on how funds would be allocated and distributed within the Englewood community. From that protest and Englewood Advisory Board is being constructed to give advice on policy and procedures that affect Englewood residents that attend Chicago Public Schools. The task force was not continued and diminished as the fervor for the recent killing of Darien Albert s weakened.

The family members that did not attend the focus groups or hear the prophetic sermons that were delivered their responses were instrumental in determining the validity of the author’s hypothesis. The author asserted that if congregants of Liberation Christian Center are exposed to prophetic preaching that address sociopolitical issues they would be motivated to become involved in community action. Community action was defined as embracing the theme of the prophetic sermon and doing any of the following:

1. Discussing its contents with family members.
2. Addressing those concerns to community leaders and elected officials.
3. Organize groups that would circulate letters, petitions and public protest.
4. Identifying and locating local resources and services to assist those that may suffer from the issue or others that may want to volunteer.

5. Volunteer at local faith based or community based organization that aids those that suffer or are at risk to the issue.

Family members that were interviewed at the conclusion of the project all stated that their respective family members did discuss the contents of the Modules of Ministry with them. This finding with the previous stated organization of the task forces and protest all contribute the validation of the author's hypothesis.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the ideology behind this project to determine whether prophetic preaching continues to be a valuable avenue for the promotion of sociopolitical change in the African American community seems to be a great foundation for a dialogue on the 21st century church. The mindset consists of a few dynamics that are prevalent in today's African American church and the church of yesteryear. The church of old was the focal point of the community. The church is defined as an entity that was inclusive of congregants and pastoral leadership. The thought is that the community had been separated from the church. The great divide between the streets and the sanctuary has widened. This widening began in the late 1960's when "negro churches" did not understand how to incorporate the new "Black Power Movement."

The Black Power Movement not only identified the physical challenges of racism by embracing "Black as beautiful" but struck to the core of Anglo Saxon Christian values or morals. These theological challenges for the established church were in direct opposition to the dogma of religion and the perception of a "white" Jesus. This white Jesus that was the symbol of the salvation and, ultimately the savior was just not working for a growing number of black people. This rejection of Jesus on any level was disturbing to the Black preacher to say the least. That passionate cry from the people was no longer just being heard by the pastors but by street organizers. These street corner prophets began to preach from every street corner in the black communities delivering prophetic messages of hope, deliverance and redemption.

Dr. King expressed his sentiments of this radical shift in philosophy in his historical book *Where Do We Go From Here* in which he elaborates on the social and political agenda of black power advocates. King describes black power as inclusive of economics, voting, education and

politics which all contribute to power. King says that power does not have to be defined by color because it has already been defined by its contents. An awesome and correct stance, however the effect the word “black” on the equation not only struck fear in white society but also black Christian leadership. The fervor and depravity that Frantz Fanon spoke of in both his books *Black Skin, White Face* and *The Wretched of the Earth* had been reached by the man of color, a bottom had been established. The quenching of the street corner prophet (jail, murder, betrayal and selling out) and the newfound silence on sociopolitical issues but an exaggerated claim of prosperity in the pulpit created a void in the community. No the true prophet was to be found. The street corner prophets were replaced with gang leaders and the black preacher moved to the suburbs. Hence the question, is there not a balm in Gilead? Is there not something that can heal the sin sick soul? How long will the children cry and the people suffer from the lack of knowledge? Not only had the power been eradicated from the community but, some would say, so had the blackness.

The research was needed to determine if a local voice could stir the consciousness of the people to respond to the ever increasing crime, unemployment and lack of education in the community. Could that voice generate enough outrage that people would decide to seek change as alternative to complacency? What has become more apparent is the need for a conscience to be present in order for an awakening to occur. For a person without God can not have a conscience and a person without a conscience is also void of God. God and conscience are a necessary presence so that a portal of entry is established to engage the individual. A common thread has to be established in a community that seems both clueless and complacent.

The thread could not be something as deep as philosophy, theology, sociology or politics; it has to be more elementary and primitive. The family is the answer. No other care whether

present or old is more prevalent in the African American community than the love of family. A void has been established, a common thread has been discovered and the only thing left to find is a vehicle to carry the message. Prophetic preaching has not become extinct nor has its ability to speak power to truth and arouse the masses. In hindsight this is a project masquerading as a personal quest to see if I am relevant.

An underlying question of interest was not only the relevancy of the African American church and pastor but the responsibility of the person. If indeed the church has lost its influence in its pursuit of affluence who or what would be its replacement? Could the community identify issues and bring those issues to the church, therefore placing a demand on the church to return to its historical roots of being the apex of community development and a catalyst for sociopolitical change? The research supports the notion that indeed the church is still relevant and an incubator of political thought. What is very evident and not expected is the dependency of the people on the pastor, not only on Christian concerns but sociopolitical concerns. The influx of vast opinions that can be heard via radio, internet and television are believed to diminish the level of influence the pastor has on congregants.

In reading the responses and observing the focus groups, it became evident that what is said by the pastor many times carries more weight than the gospel. The first suggestion is that if this project was duplicated or expanded it would be interesting to see if the same results would be yielded with another individual who is not the pastor as the researcher, facilitator and preacher. The fact that I served as all very well may have swayed the responses and directly influenced involvement. Another suggested change would be to investigate what would happen if the community indeed brought issues to the church for a response. Would the church and the pastor's response be as urgent and genuine for a concern birthed outside of the church or pulpit?

The ideal setting would be the church operating in response to the community's agenda juxtaposed to the pastor's agenda. I would also not supply the participants with the Module of Ministry focus. Instead I would allow the topics to be picked not in relation to historical community issues or current events, but from a preliminary focus group.

The project created various emotional milestones within the ministry context. Participants and their families bonded in solidarity around issues of concern. This author watched as the interest levels of participants grew in conjunction with the non participating congregants wanting to be part of the discussion. Individuals who previously seemed either alienated or estranged from their respective family members received a great amount of comfort when more personal topics were discussed. The need to be heard and understood was evident in every comment along with a genuine consideration of what was being stated. It was an unexpected occurrence to witness familial healing and reconciliation in the group discussions. If the study were to be duplicated, it may be advantageous to explore previous familial issues amongst family members. I cannot say that these strained relationships betwixt family members either helped or hindered the process but from a social perspective it is worth further research.

The participants' eagerness to become involved in both of the social protests was an additional welcomed surprise. The individuals that served as participants in this model of ministry had never been vocal or collaborated of their own volition to partake in public display of civic disobedience in the past. They had a fire that squalled, "Let's do something!" and it was that passion of concern that directly leads to the formation of the Englewood Advisory Board. They created a much needed platform for an ecumenical presence in the decision making process involving their children's education.

In summary the original research question has been substantiated, would Englewood residents, who attend Liberation Christian Center who were exposed to prophetic preaching, be motivated to become involved in community action. It was proven by the fact that each family engaged in an informative and healthy dialogue. This dialogue was carried into the family not by the eldest member, youngest member, the more gregarious member, or the most astute, but was carried by the passion of the person with whom that the topic resonated most loudly. This leads to the belief that sociopolitical concerns cannot be categorized into age differences, gender difference, or religious affiliation, or lack thereof, but by the love that transcends humanity to another level of justice for all.

In conclusion the role of the prophetic voice and the church that houses that voice is as much needed today as it was yesterday. The forerunners blazing paths in the wilderness of righteousness and making crooked things straight are alive and well. The prophetic voice may be on life support but it is still supporting the right to live a life free of social injustice and racial inequality. The individual, the family, the community and the church are still bound together in such a way that lets no man put them asunder. The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the church of Rome posed this question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" and the resounding answer has always been and will continue to be, "Nothing."

APPENDIX A
MINISTRY MODULE 1

MODULE 1
HIV/AIDS
PRE AND POST TEST SURVEY

Date _____

Family _____

(Pre and post surveys given Sunday, September 6, 2009 @ 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM respectively)

Please complete to the best of your ability and understanding.

1. Do you consider yourself socially aware?
2. Do you consider yourself politically aware?
3. Who would be the person in your family that has the most social awareness?
4. Who would be the person in your family that has the most political awareness?
5. What is the major social issue of Englewood? 95% listed at least two.
6. What is the major political issue in Englewood?
7. What is the major political issue in Englewood?
8. What shapes your social views?
9. What shapes your political views?
10. Have you ever been a social campaign?
11. Have you ever been involved in political campaign?
12. Name the person in your family that strongly effects your actions.
13. Has a person in your family contracted or died from HIV/AIDS?
14. Have you ever been tested for HIV/AIDS?
15. Are you aware of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Englewood?
16. Do you know the fastest growing population of new HIV cases?
17. Do you feel you should personally do something about the spread of HIV/AIDS?
18. If you believe you should do something about the spread of HIV/AIDS. What could that be?
19. Would you consider HIV/AIDS a social or a political issue?
20. Would you consider HIV/AIDS a Christian issue?

MODULE 1 PRESENTATION HIV/AIDS

(Presentation given Sunday, September 6, 2009 @ 9:30 AM)

The Numbers

HIV/AIDS in 2007

- Blacks accounted for 51% of the 42,655 (including children) new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in 34 states with long-term, confidential name-based HIV reporting
- Blacks accounted for 48% of the 551,932 persons* (including children) living with HIV/AIDS in 34 states with long-term, confidential name-based HIV reporting
- For black women living with HIV/AIDS, the most common methods of transmission were high-risk heterosexual contact and injection drug use.
- For black men living with HIV/AIDS, the most common methods of HIV transmission were (in order):
 - sexual contact with other men
 - injection drug use
 - high-risk heterosexual contact
 - Early in the epidemic, HIV infection and AIDS were diagnosed for relatively few women and female adolescents (although we know now that many women were infected with HIV through injection drug use but that their infections were not diagnosed). Today, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses.
 - Women of color are especially affected by HIV infection and AIDS. In 2004 (the most recent year for which data are available), HIV infection was
- the leading cause of death for black women (including African American women) aged 25–34 years.
- the 3rd leading cause of death for black women aged 35–44 years.
- the 4th leading cause of death for black women aged 45–54 years.
- the 4th leading cause of death for Hispanic women aged 35–44 years.

African Americans were disproportionately affected by HIV infection; accounting for 55% of all HIV infections reported among persons aged 13–24.

Englewood is at the top of all lists associated with those that have contracted the disease in the last three years. Our community with the influx of formerly incarcerated individuals

returning to our communities from extended jail stays were brothers engaged in sexual activities has resulted in an increase in new HIV/AIDS cases in Englewood.

It's no secret, HIV medicines are very expensive. For most, insurances, drug assistance programs, or community resources pay most of the cost. But what about those who are not so fortunate. While we all know HIV medications are very costly, not taking them can be even more costly. Have you ever wondered what those HIV medications you are taking cost each month? The following table will give you an idea just how pricey HIV medications can be.

COST PER MONTH (estimates) - Medication Fact Sheets	
Agenerase	\$772
Aptivus	\$1117.50
Combivir	\$752.64
Crixivan	\$570.96
Emtriva	\$347.11
Epivir 300mg	\$347.11
Epzicom	\$813.55
Fortovase	\$263.35
Fuzeon	\$2315.40
Hivid	\$273.00
Invirase	\$748.50
Kaletra	\$796.26
Lexiva	\$658.99
Norvir	\$321.46
Rescriptor	\$316.35
Retrovir	\$405.59
Reyataz	\$892.91
Sustiva 600mg	\$499.43
Trizivir	\$1164.35
Truvada	\$867.99
Videx EC 400mg	\$346.04
Viramune	\$442.45
Zerit	\$385.88
Ziagen	\$466.44

It is predicted that every HIV/ AIDS patient within a year will spend an average of \$600 per month on medicine. That is the equivalent of \$8,400 a year with a life expectancy of living with the disease now approaching well over 65. A person contracting the disease at 13 and living to be 65 would have spent \$8,400 a year at 52 years for a total cost of \$436,800 on medicine alone.

MODULE 1 SERMONIC PRESENTATION HIV/AIDS

(Prophetic Sermon preached Sunday, September 6, 2009 @ 11:00 AM)

COMING OUT THE CLOSET EZEKIEL 37: 12 – 14 (KJV)

¹² *Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.*

¹³ *Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.*

¹⁴ *I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it," says the Lord.*

We live in a society that is ever evolving daily. Our attitudes of old are being shifted to more liberal understandings. These understandings have historically been associated with the traditional teachings of the black church. What was taboo in yesteryear is plisse today. What use to shock folks and be scandalous is a mere slap on the wrist today?

This shift in mindset is based on the freedom fights of the 1960's and 1970's. When like individuals with similar concerns galvanized and organized themselves to be recognized and respected. African Americans continued their fight for equality through cries of Black Power. The Gay and Lesbian community use their voting powers to have homosexuality removed from the DSM IV as a psychological evaluation. These fights for equality made the powers to be to reflect on how it feels to walk in the shoes of the least of these.

There are certain things that cannot be hidden thou some may attempt; color and gender. You cannot hide the color of your skin and you cannot hide the fact that you are male or female but many attempt to hide their sexuality because of the so many negative connotation associated with your preference. That is why the term "Coming Out The Closest" has become the catch phrase for those that choose to identify their sexual preference. This "outing" experience has contributed to the social stigma of being in same sex relationships but it has not brought to the forefront a disease that has long been associated with that beloved community.

Coming out the closest has not brought with it the much needed information that HIV/AIDS is prevalent in the community. Nor has it been shared how the community of gays and lesbians spread awareness and its effectiveness in promoting safe sex.

When take a look at the statistics associated with this scurvy and its effects on the African American community. I think we need to come out of the closet.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in African American communities is a continuing public health crisis for the United States. At the end of 2006 there were an estimated 1.1 million people living with HIV infection, of which almost half (46%) were black/African American. While blacks represent approximately 12 percent of the U.S. population, they continue to account for a higher

proportion of cases at all stages of HIV/AIDS—from infection with HIV to death with AIDS—compared with members of other races and ethnicities.

The Numbers

HIV/AIDS in 2007

- Blacks accounted for 51% of the 42, 655 (including children) new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in 34 states with long-term, confidential name-based HIV reporting
- Blacks accounted for 48% of the 551,932 persons* (including children) living with HIV/AIDS in 34 states with long-term, confidential name-based HIV reporting
- For black women living with HIV/AIDS, the most common methods of transmission were high-risk heterosexual contact and injection drug use.
- For black men living with HIV/AIDS, the most common methods of HIV transmission were (in order):
 - sexual contact with other men
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 - Early in the epidemic, HIV infection and AIDS were diagnosed for relatively few women and female adolescents (although we know now that many women were infected with HIV through injection drug use but that their infections were not diagnosed). Today, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses.
 - Women of color are especially affected by HIV infection and AIDS. In 2004 (the most recent year for which data are available), HIV infection was
- the leading cause of death for black women (including African American women) aged 25–34 years.
- the 3rd leading cause of death for black women aged 35–44 years.
- the 4th leading cause of death for black women aged 45–54 years.
- the 4th leading cause of death for Hispanic women aged 35–44 years.

African Americans were disproportionately affected by HIV infection; accounting for 55% of all HIV infections reported among persons aged 13–24.

Englewood is at the top of all list associated with those that have contracted the disease in the last three years. Our community with the influx of formerly incarcerated individuals returning to our communities from extended jail stays were brothers engaged in sexual activities has resulted in an increase in new HIV/AIDS cases in Englewood.

With the recent release of so many men that have done over twenty years of jail time and the Governor's office cutting \$50,000 for the Englewood United Methodist Church for HIV/AIDS ministry which promotes prevention. One can only assume that there must be an ulterior motive. That motive is financial. It is predicted that every HIV/ AIDS patient within a year will spend an average of \$600 per month on medicine. That is the equivalent of \$8,400 a year with a life expectancy of living with the disease now approaching well over 65. A person contracting the disease at 13 and living to be 65 would have spent \$8,400 a year at 52 years for a total cost of \$436,800 on medicine alone. We must come out the closet and realize that the contracting of HIV/AIDS amongst our young people is business for pharmaceutical companies. There is no profit in a cure.

We all have stuff have skeletons in our closets and as matter a fact there are a few of us here that have living and breathing stuff in our closets. Things that are killing our spirits, our families, and our communities. We must all come out the closet to protect what is valuable to us our future and our children. If we are going to receive the promises of our seed's seed being blessed we must protect that seed at all cost.

Without adequate support for the family, these programs are worthless because, even if they attain their stated economic, health or nutrition goals, their end result will be families with an appearance of abundance of material possessions, and apparently healthy and well-nourished children. But, if these children have not developed adequate affective bonds to their families and their communities, they will lack an inner vision of a positive purpose in life and become social malcontents that easily fall prey to drugs gangs, or other self- or socially destructive behaviors - surely not a desirable goal, either for the community or for the individual. However, this depressing situation appears to be occurring with increasing frequency in communities all over the world especially in Englewood

We must unite through the love of family and stop the spread of HIV/AIDS for the sole purpose of big companies making billions of the backs of our misery.

And this is how we fill in our community with the same words that God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel *"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'"*

But there is a God and there is a balm in Gilead. Those old dry bones of shame, low self esteem, compromise, hopelessness and powerlessness shall fade. And as God told the prophet I will open your graves and bring you out the grave and place my spirit upon you.

And you never have to live with family secrets in eth closets because God has promised anointing of the spirit. So come out that closet and proclaim enough is enough I will not dig another grave for my family members. I am coming out the closet and these bones will not leave and reign over my life anymore.

APPENDIX B

MINISTRY MODULE 2

MODULE 2
African American Male Incarceration
PRE AND POST TEST SURVEY
Date _____
Family _____

(Pre and post surveys given Sunday, September 13, 2009 @ 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM respectively)

Please complete to the best of your ability and understanding.

1. Have you or a family member ever been incarcerated?
2. Are you or the family member that has been incarcerated a male?
3. Of those that have been incarcerated what is the highest grade level they achieved prior to incarceration.
4. Does that individual reside in your home now?
5. Do you have any family members employed by the Department of Corrections or Cook County Sheriff's Office?
6. Is the person that was incarcerated currently employed?
7. Do you believe that it is designed by the government or big business to incarcerate African American males?
8. Would you consider African American male incarceration a social issue?
9. Would you consider African American male incarceration a political issue?
10. Would you consider African American male incarceration a Christian issue?
11. What do you think should be done about the issue?

MODULE 2 PRESENTATION

African American Male Incarceration

(Presentation given Sunday, September 13, 2009 @ 9:30 AM)

According to a Justice Department report released in July 2003, the U.S. prison population surpassed 2 million for the first time—2,166,260 people were incarcerated in prisons or jails at the end of 2002 (the latest statistics available). Since 1990, the U.S. prison population, already the world's largest, has almost doubled.

About two-thirds of prisoners were in state and federal prisons, while the rest were in local jails. The report does not count all juvenile offenders, but noted that there were more than 10,000 inmates under age 18 held in adult prisons and jails in 2002. The number of women in federal and state prisons reached 97,491.

About 10.4% of the entire African-American male population in the United States aged 25 to 29 was incarcerated, by far the largest racial or ethnic group—by comparison, 2.4% of Hispanic men and 1.2% of white men in that same age group were incarcerated. According to a report by the Justice Policy Institute in 2002, the number of black men in prison has grown to five times the rate it was twenty years ago. Today, more African-American men are in jail than in college. In 2000 there were 791,600 black men in prison and 603,032 enrolled in college. In 1980, there were 143,000 black men in prison and 463,700 enrolled in college.

For example, the prison boom, in terms of both the number of prisons built and the escalating numbers of citizens sent to prison, as well as the locating of prisons in deindustrialized communities and rural communities is an economic advantage that accrues to whites in the form of jobs—as prison staff—and in terms of building contracts and other services that are necessary when a town builds a prison. These advantages by and large do not accrue to African American communities.

Of the 2.6 million Americans who are incarcerated, one million (43%) are African American men. In other words, more than 40% of *all* American prisoners, men and women, are African American *men*. Controlling for gender, African Americans comprise nearly two thirds (62%) of the male prison population, yet they make up just 13% of the U.S. male population

In terms of probability, 90 out of every 1,000 men in the United States will be incarcerated in their lifetimes. When we break down the data by race, only 44 out of every 1,000 (4%) white men will be incarcerated, but 285 out of every 1,000 (28.5%) African American men will be incarcerated in their lifetimes¹¹. Put another way, nearly 1 in 3 African American men will be incarcerated during their lifetimes.

Taking a closer look, we see that not only do African American men make up a disproportionate percentage of the prison population, but this is exaggerated at particular age categories: specifically young men aged 18–34 who are at the height of their economic productivity and

family involvement. Nearly 10% of all African American men aged 25–29 are incarcerated in the prison system.

If they are released, they enter the labor force a decade after their peers, which will have irretrievable consequences on their lifetime earnings and on their retirement savings—if they are able to accrue any at all.

Education and race also work together to shape the likelihood that one will end up in prison. For example, 11.5% of all African American men between the ages of 20 and 40 were in prison in 2000, but 32.4% of African American men of the same age who had dropped out of high school were incarcerated. Thus, the probability that an African American man will go to prison is increased threefold if he is a high school dropout.

MODULE 2 SERMONIC PRESENTATION
African American Male Incarceration

(Prophetic Sermon preached Sunday, September 13, 2009 @ 11:00 AM)

PAUSE TO PRAY

EPESIANS 3:14-21 (KJV)

¹⁴ *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*
¹⁵ *from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*
¹⁶ *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,*
¹⁷ *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*
¹⁸ *may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--*
¹⁹ *to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*
²⁰ *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*
²¹ *to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

As a part of the beloved community of God we must access our surroundings and formulate a strategy that makes Jesus death relevant in the "hood." We as believers, followers and saints of Christ most assume this monumental task of merging the madness of the street with the glorification of our Savior. It is a tremendous task considering that the prophetic voice that use to reside on the pulpits of urban American has departed for the comforts of suburbia living. This has created a void in the church coupled with the void that has been left on the street corners of Englewood. Corners that once sang the ideologies of social justice and black power have been over turned with violence drugs and Gangster Disciples.

The community of Englewood is inundated with a plethora of social issues. We are in the top ten nationally in teen pregnancy, murder, educational drop out, new HIV/AIDS cases, drug addiction and incarceration. We have become so accustomed to this way of living that our only shock would be if it did not happen.

This places us in a peculiar predicament preaching to a people that have inherited hopelessness. Preaching to a community were they believe they have been forgotten by both the government and God. Englewood is a place where prayers do not make it to heaven and go unanswered. Because after all heaven must be bombarded with cries from "lil" children that are praying out fear. Fear that they will be shot, fear that they mother will not recover from the beating her boyfriend gave her, fears they will not leave to be 18, fears of getting pregnant and getting AIDS. The bible says the effectual prayers of the righteous availeth much. But it seems that the unrighteous are winning and the children are dying. The must prevalent cry coming from the mouths of babes is where is my daddy. Daddy is not in the house; Daddy is not in school; Daddy is not a work; Daddy is in jail.

James Allen in his brilliant book *As A Man Thinketh* states and I quote “That a man can not choose his circumstances but he can choose his thought so indirectly he can shape his circumstances. We are not privy to have a one on one with God prior to our arrival and dictate what type of situation we want to be birthed into. But once God has placed us here our thoughts can be constructed that our entrance will not dictate our exit. We do not have to become a product of our environment. And just because you came in one way does not mean you have to exit in the same manner.

You were born in poverty does not mean you have to die poor
You were born uneducated does not mean you have to die without knowledge
You were born hopeless does not mean you have to die without faith
You were born powerless does not mean you have to die without the power of the Holy Ghost

I am not making excuses or justifying the choices our young black brothers made to become incarcerated. But I am questioning the disproportionate number of them being locked up as we speak.

About 10.4% of the entire African-American male population in the United States aged 25 to 29 was incarcerated, by far the largest racial or ethnic group—by comparison, 2.4% of Hispanic men and 1.2% of white men in that same age group were incarcerated. According to a report by the Justice Policy Institute in 2002, the number of black men in prison has grown to five times the rate it was twenty years ago. Today, more African-American men are in jail than in college. In 2000 there were 791,600 black men in prison and 603,032 enrolled in college. In 1980, there were 143,000 black men in prison and 463,700 enrolled in college.

Of the 2.6 million Americans who are incarcerated, one million (43%) are African American men. In other words, more than 40% of *all* American prisoners, men and women, are African American *men*. Controlling for gender, African Americans comprise nearly two thirds (62%) of the male prison population, yet they make up just 13% of the U.S. male population. In terms of probability, 90 out of every 1,000 men in the United States will be incarcerated in their lifetimes. Put another way, nearly 1 in 3 African American men will be incarcerated during their lifetimes.

And there exist a diabolical scheme to separate these men from their families for the sake of profits. As they rot in prisons their families are deteriorating. Our fathers, brothers, and sons have become the fulfillment of campaign promises. Promises made by politicians to crack down on crime and create jobs.

For example, the prison boom, in terms of both the number of prisons built and the escalating numbers of citizens sent to prison, as well as the locating of prisons in deindustrialized communities and rural communities is an economic advantage that accrues to whites in the form of jobs—as prison staff—and in terms of building contracts and other services that are necessary when a town builds a prison. These advantages by and large do not accrue to African American communities. In laymen terms downstate cities are lobbying for prisons. They are clearing corn fields to make room for maximum security prisons to bring stability to their failing economies. They have stop growing corn and soybeans and have invested in a new crop called “niggas.”

What are we to do the face of this calamity? We gain insight from that globetrotting, Asiatic, black, ex con from Tarsus by the name of Paul. In his letter to the church of Ephesus the city of that housed the temple of the Greek goddess Diana. Ephesus is a place that travelers and tourist visited to worship the mythological goddess and purchase silver replicas of the temple. This was big business, spiritual ignorance is always lucrative. When the Apostle Paul began to prophetically preach about the good news of Jesus his preaching started messing with business. Let me pause: whenever you start talking about Jesus it will disrupt the status quo, and if you are not disrupting the status quo, I would question whether you are doing Jesus type ministry. And if you are true child of God you should be bad for business.

And this is why Paul in the midst of his epistle around the 14th verse of chapter 3 pauses to pray. Out of nowhere he pauses to send up prayer to God for the strength to come against the tribulations that he face. I just want to tell you that prayer still works and I am so glad somebody prayed for me. Paul say I kneel to the father that he may dwell in our hearts as we fight back against the business of locking up our fathers, our sons, and our brothers.

The Apostle Paul knew the power of prayer it was one his chief weapons.

He said:

2 Cor. 13:9 (NIV) "...and our prayer is for your perfection."

Phil 1:9-11 "And this I pray...that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."

Col 1:9-10 "...we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects...."

Eph 6:19 "...and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel...."

Col 1:10 (NIV) "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord...bearing fruit in every good work...."

1 Thess 3:10 (NIV) "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith."

2 Thess 1:11 (NIV) "We constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith."

2 Thess 3:1 "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you."

Philemon 1:6 (NIV) "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a powerful understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

1 Thess 3:13 (NIV) "May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God...."

2 Thess 2:16; Col 1:10-11 (NIV) "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord...being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...."

Eph 1:17 (NIV) "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know Him better...."

Col 1: 9-10 "...we have not ceased to pray for you...that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord...increasing in the knowledge of God."

Eph 3:17b-19; Col. 1:10-11 (NIV) "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord...being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...."

1 Thess 3:13 (NIV) "May He strengthens your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God...."

2 Thess 2:16 "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."

Phil 1:9 "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and discernment...."

1 Thess 3:12 "...and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you."

2 Thess 3:5 "And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ."

1 Cor 1:3; Eph. 1:18-19 "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know...what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe."

Paul paused in the midst of his praise to whisper a prayer. I know the statistics and I know the obstacles but it is written in our text Now unto him... *NOT JUST ANYBODY BUT HIM* that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (Eph 3:21).

APPENDIX C
MINISTRY MODULE 3

MODULE 3
YOUTH KILLINGS AND VIOLENCE
PRE AND POST TEST SURVEY

Date _____

Family _____

(Pre and post surveys given Sunday, September 20, 2009 @ 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM respectively)

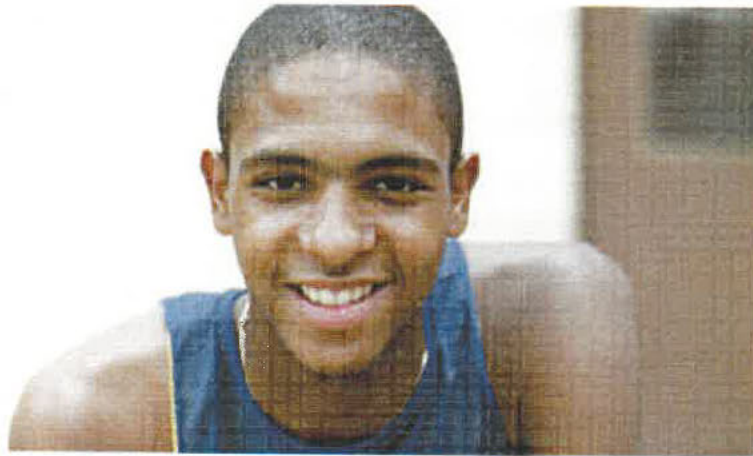
Please complete to the best of your ability and understanding.

1. How have the Chicago Public School killings effective you?
2. Do you or did you attend a Chicago Public School?
3. Do you have children that attend Chicago Public School?
4. What is you biggest concern as relates to your children's future?
5. What would you suggest as a solution the killings?
6. Have you ever been a victim of a violent act / domestic violence?
7. What is your overall sentiment of the killings?
8. How do you feel after the sermon?
9. What part of the sermon that you most closely identify?
10. What will you personally do since you heard the sermon?
11. Will you carry this message into your home and community?

MODULE 3 PRESENTATION
African American Male Incarceration

(Presentation given Sunday, September 20, 2009 @ 9:30 AM)

Ben Wilson's death resonates 25 years later



Ben Wilson's death touched a nerve in Chicago and beyond, producing outrage and demands for street violence to end. Roughly 8,000 attended his wake in Simeon's gym two days after he died. The following day, 10,000 crammed into Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH headquarters for Wilson's funeral. Jackson, Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and the world screamed for lessons to be learned from this waste.

Nothing has been learned which is evident in the fact that 25 years later young people of Chicago blood paints the streets.

2008's juvenile homicide total in Chicago, 50, was the highest in seven years.

Young people in Chicago are dying violent deaths at an alarming rate. So far this school year, 2009, at least 36 Chicago Public School students have been killed, most of them victims of gunshots. Scores of other Chicago children and teenagers have been wounded in shootings, and there are concerns that the gun violence could escalate when school is out for the summer in a few weeks.

Father Plegger is making a very visual statement to show that the nation is in "distress" over the growing numbers of young deaths. The murder happened just as community activists are taking

drastic measures to draw attention to the ongoing effort to stop gun violence. Father Michael Pfleger hung an upside down flag in front of Saint Sabina Church. It's an old symbol of distress, and Pfleger says, he knows it's a radical move.

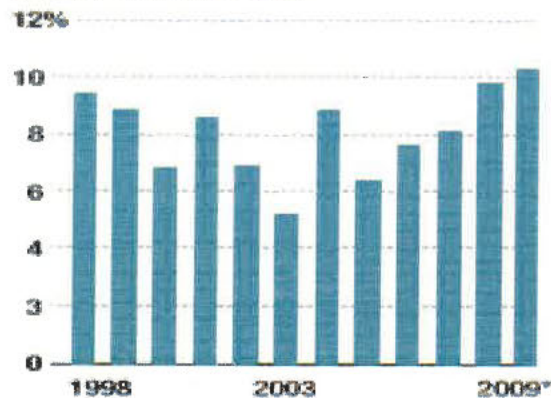
"The whole country reacted aggressively to the possibility of the swine flu. But we have remained silent to the reality of the killing of our children," said Pfleger.

CHICAGO - Attorney General Eric Holder said Wednesday that the beating death of a 16-year-old high school student was a "stark wake-up call" to the nation to confront youth violence. Holder and Education Secretary Arne Duncan were sent by President Barack Obama to Chicago to meet with school officials, parents and students to discuss youth violence after the vicious beating of Derrion Albert on Sept. 24. The fatal attack was captured on a cell phone video, and viewed by millions across the nation. The scenes in the video "left an indelible mark on the mind of every American who has seen them," Holder said.

Chicago Homicides

Since January, more than 1 in 10 homicide victims in Chicago have been 16 or younger. Community leaders say the violence is reaching a crisis level.

(percent of total victims)



* as of May 25

SOURCE: Chicago Police Department

MODULE 3 SERMONIC PRESENTATION YOUTH KILLINGS AND VIOLENCE

(Prophetic Sermon preached Sunday, September 20, 2009 @ 11:00 AM)
AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT
PSALMS 23: 4 (KJV)

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

We cannot simply allow social issues pass us by as if we are witnesses and not participants in what is happening around us. It saddens me that without some type of tug on our conscience to say “let’s get involved” we merely stand on the sideline as observers. The moment to get off the side line and into the game is NOW! If we call ourselves Christians and you have no questions how awesome the power of God and the grace of Jesus are and how that can manifest through you. Then I must ask you how you dare raise your hands in praise in a church called Liberation.

In the words of the great prophet Dr. Martin Luther King:

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends. He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.

This is an evil that has gripped our land. It has waged war against our youngest and brightest. In the same line of thought when drugs tore the fiber out of our families and communities and when the scurvy called HIV/AIDS knocked on everyone’s door. These calamities were categorized as epidemics. Cries bellowed from all facets of life of what should we do with these epidemics.

An epidemic is defined as affecting or tending to affect a disproportionately large number of individuals within a population, community, or region at the same time. It is not sporadic but it happens consistently without ceasing either all at once or over a period of time. This clearly defines what is happening our community and our city an “epidemic of disrespect”

When 100 Chicago Public School children have been killed and over three hundred have been victims of violence in the last two years. Meanwhile Mayor Daley and Olympic aspirants wish to minimize those atrocities to secure the 2016 Olympics. They pretend that it is the children fault that there safe passage to and from school can not be guaranteed. Especially when the children have bought into the dream that education is the key and they are not safe to obtain what we have deemed valuable.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When Chicago and America has the grandiosity and swagger to believe they can simply demand the Olympics in spite of the cries of babies blood from the streets of Chicago.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When governmental officials and “not it all” psychologists and sociologists believe they can define a problem without consulted to the victims.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When they believe they can step over the bodies of our slain children.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When they deny us access to jobs, fair housing, fair credit, and social services but yet ask us for our vote.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When elected officials from our community never questioned were the \$30 million dollars would be spent or how will get the jobs.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When a congressman can stand on the Congressional and call the President of The United States a liar

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When Michael Vick’s dog fighting case and an old white man on the north side getting rob gets more new coverage thane three children being murdered.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When they can take your health care premiums and deny you coverage after they get your money.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When they charge you a large rate and will drop you for failing a claim because of the neighborhood you live in do not have white residents.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When they believe they can send the same Uncle Tom spokesmen with the same speeches and same lies masqueraded as promises saying please believe me this time.

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When our men are responding to names like “dawg”, “pimp” and “player” and our young women have become immune to be called “b\$#%^s” and “hoes”

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

When a city official had the audacity to call me on the phone and threaten me. By saying if I organize a youth march my church and I will be in jeopardy. And I promptly told him if he calls me again I will “kick his ass.”

THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DISRESPECT!

And to prove my point there are more of you here upset that I said “kick his ass” then the 100 children that have been murdered. You have been affected by the epidemic called disrespect.

You may not be tired of being the last never first

You may not be tired of being the borrower not the lender

You may not be tired of being called out of your name

You may not be tired of paying higher rates based on your address or being denied because of your color skin

You may not be tired of burying your children

You may not be tired of them suspending more money to lock up our children then they do to educate them

You may not be tire of them placing greed before community

You may not be tired of inadequate health care or bias new reporting

But one thing you should be tired of is being disrespected

This is where we find ourselves in our text today. We find the thrice anointed king called David in the midst of being disrespect. He was disrespected when the prophet Samuel came to his father's Jesse house looking for the next king of Israel. His father after offering six of his sons to Samuel for consideration he did not even consider the shepherd boy.

Not only was he disrespected by his father. He was also disrespected by his brothers was when he cane to feed them in the midst of war his brothers asked him why are you here.

David looked at the Philistine giant and asked is there not a cause.

Not only was he disrespected by his family he was disrespected by his enemies. The giant Goliath looked at him and said how this dog dare stand up top me. I just want the children of Liberation to know when you feel that you have been disrespected you can bring down giants

Not only did Goliath disrespect but Saul his mentor disrespected. Saul tried to kill because of his anointing and people will disrespect you when they know you're anointed.

The reason they believe they can disrespect you is because they have forgotten what it says in the Psalms 23. They thought they could disrespect you because were in hopeless situation. They thought they could disrespect you because you wear your pants hanging down. They thought they can disrespect you because they didn't think you were ever going to make it. Because if the crack didn't get you, HIV would and if AIDS didn't get you, jail would and if jail didn't get you, then the lack of education would and if lack education didn't get you then a bullet would surely find you.

They thought they could disrespect you because they thought death was following you. What they didn't understand was that was not death but the Bible says thou I may walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

The last thing I want you know I have never seen a shadow do nothing to you.

APPENDIX D

MINISTRY MODULE 4

MINISTRY MODULE 4
DISPARAGING APPROPRIATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, & CITY FUNDING
PRE AND POST TEST SURVEY

Date _____

Family _____

(Pre and post surveys given Sunday, September 27, 2009 @ 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM respectively)

Please complete to the best of your ability and understanding.

Pre and Post Test Responses

1. What do you feel is the most needed resource in Englewood?
2. Do you feel there are adequate social service resources in Englewood?
3. Do you know how social services are funded?
4. Do you consider social services agency as possible opportunity for employment?
5. Do you feel more affluent communities have more social service resources?
6. Whose responsibility is it to assure that a community gets adequate social services?
7. Have you sought assistance from a social service agency in Englewood?
8. Do you know the definition of a social service agency?
9. Define it.
10. Did the sermon help you gain a better understanding of the role of the church in social services?

MODULE 4 PRESENTATION DISPARAGING APPROPRIATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, & CITY FUNDING

(Presentation given Sunday, September 27, 2009 @ 9:30 AM)

Tax increase a must to protect social services

Despite the need for funding, Illinois is in a significant amount of debt. In order to maintain social service funding, the state needs revenue. A tax increase is inevitable, Quinn said." We have to do this to have a balanced budget and healthy state," he added. Not only would cutting down on social services leave people behind, it would also be detrimental to the economy to cut down on this network, Quinn said.

The proposed budget would cut 30 to 40 percent of the funding for social services, said Mark Klaus, president of Charleston Transitional Facility. Some programs would be entirely cut out, he added." People will realize that people with disabilities, special needs and kids are being used as a pawn to rally the troops and get things going," he said. "They are being used to make up for the deficit." These cuts would significantly impact the vulnerable members of society, Klaus said." People will lose their jobs and won't be able to live independently in the community," he added. Brian Ritcher, developmental facility manager, has worked with people with special needs for 19 years. "These people don't really have any other options," Ritcher said.

Not only do social services provide care facilities for those with special needs, they also aid people and provide them with the resources they need to thrive. With their resources taken away, they will no longer be able to function in society, he said." As soon as I started working with (my patients), they take off," Ritcher said. The cuts would specifically impact grant funding. "They're saying that grant funding is done as of June 30th," he said. "Grant programs are usually smaller and independent of larger agencies" Ritcher added apartment services and job placement are typically funded by grants. "If you are able bodied and you're breathing, we want you working in the state of Illinois," Quinn said. Quinn also stated that programs for veterans, which fall under social services, are essential." We have two wars going on," he said. "I'm not going to cut programs that help veterans coming home ... These programs are vital to the lives of people."

Still, Quinn stressed that in order to maintain these programs tax increases are necessary." My mission is to repair the damage," he added.



From The Episcopal Desk of Bishop James E. Dukes

Media Release: September 23, 2009

CPS was awarded a 38 Million grant (Economic Stimulus) for the purpose of creating anti violence strategies in CPS. Once Pastors / Community Based Organizations heard this we immediately requested a meeting to become a part of the strategy making process. CPS official set a meeting Friday, September 25 @ New Covenant.

After the last killing of the Simeon student the Tribune interview CEO Hubberman and he stated that he was going to expedite the plan for anti violence which included

- The plan launched three weeks ago by schools chief Ron Hubberman promises to offer intensive counseling and a job to the 200 students most at-risk of being victims
- The Board of Education will vote Wednesday on whether to enter into an agreement with Youth Advocacy Programs Inc., a Pennsylvania-based group that provides such programs for youths and families.

Both of these are blatant disrespect towards the efforts of organization that have been involved in the Englewood community where most of these services will occur. We have submitted countless proposals, attend and officiated the funerals of the victims, organized marches, and have existing after school programs.

Englewood has the highest unemployment rate in the city and jobs that will be created because that is the major purpose of the stimulus money will go to a company in Pennsylvania that does the exact same services that we have done for years.

Back door politics, secret votes. no community input into strategies and no bid contracts have bee the history of city politics and we will not allow this occur again at the expense of our children lives.

Approximately 50 leaders of Faith Based & Community Based organizations will attend today's Board Meeting and express our displeasure for these processes and the lack of consideration. For

Mr. Hubberman to conduct a meeting with clergy after the vote has been passed is very disrespectful and will not be tolerated.

We are prepared to have a sit in protest of the vote and are equally prepared to go to jail for the sake of our children.

Finally, we will formally and publicly announce that because of the way the city conducts business without community support we can in good conscience believe they will fulfill the many promises they have made as it relates to the 2016 Olympics therefore the community of Englewood will withdraw our support of the Olympic bid and send a letter to the IOC.

In Him
+Bishop James E. Dukes
Liberation Christian Center
Pastors of Englewood, Board Member

South Side ministers irate over CPS anti-violence plan

Press Response: ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX NEWS

Saying that Chicago schools chief Ron Huberman had "purposely disrespected" them, a group of Englewood neighborhood pastors said this morning they will protest the award of a \$38 million contract by CPS to combat youth violence.

About 50 members of the Pastors of Englewood Association will attend a Chicago Public Schools Board meeting today and are "prepared to be arrested" if the board approves a contract with a Pennsylvania group to provide services to at-risk students, Bishop James Dukes said.

They complained the school system had frozen them out. The ministers also said that if the contract is approved they also will write to the International Olympic Committee withdrawing their support for the city's bid for the 2016 Olympic Games.

The ministers were reacting to earlier statements by Huberman that the school system intended to offer counseling and jobs to the 200 students most at-risk of being victims of violence. As part of that effort, Huberman proposed entering into a contract with Youth Advocacy Programs Inc., they noted, citing media reports.

"Both of these are blatant disrespect toward the efforts of the organization(s) that have been involved in the Englewood community where most of these services will occur," the ministers said in news releases issued this morning. "We have submitted countless proposals, attend and officiated the funerals of the victims, marches, have existing after school programs."

"Back door politics, secret votes have entered into the issue. No community input into strategies and no bid contracts have been the history of city politics and the pastors refuse to allow this to occur again at the expense of children's lives."

MODULE 4 SERMONIC PRESENTATION
DISPARAGING APPROPRIATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, & CITY FUNDING

(Prophetic Sermon preached Sunday, September 27, 2009 @ 11:00 AM)

I GOT A MADE UP MIND
JAMES1:1-8

¹ *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.*

² *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*

³ *knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.*

⁴ *But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

⁵ *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

⁶ *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

⁷ *For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;*

⁸ *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

If I were to gather the photo albums of the members and we were to look at their old pictures and look at them now we would all be able to agree that have changed. These people have changed, matured, and became seasoned. We all have matured physically, we have no choice. (balder, hair hats, thinner, wider, we will change as we mature.) We will not all mature spiritually. (I've been churches were there are more babies sitting in the pews than there are crawling in the nursery.) Spiritual maturity is a choice and it's a journey.

One of the areas we must mature spiritual is the role the church must take in social services. We must become cognizant of the vast amount of resources that are available in our communities and who are supplying those resources. We have become so dependent on others supplying our demands that we have lost sight of the fact that we can help ourselves. Just as the prophet James Brown said "Just open the door and I will get it myself"

In Booker T. Washington's masterpiece "*Up From Slavery*" he tells of a time we went to recruit students for Tuskegee Institute. He was invited to dinner at a poor black family's house. They had no meager accommodation and an every basic meal. They apologized to Dr. Washington repeatedly about the lack of food and they promised if he would return in the

beginning of the month when their government check arrives they would prepare a feast. Dr. Washington found it ironic that they lived on a farm where they could grow whatever they wanted to eat but yet they waited for others to supply their needs.

We are in this current state in the church and the community. Individuals at the Chicago Public School and the Board of Education believes that e should wait on others to supply our needs. This gives implications that we are not capable of mentoring, education, and molding our children. That somehow our social agencies that have not only been the backbone of our existence but have been the African American church heritage to be the aid in the community. I am outraged that they continue to invest in others and give jobs to others when we have capable people and churches in the community that can supply equal or better services.

The tendency to give funding to so called “larger” organization without considering those that already serve the community most stop. We were promised equal access to those dollars and were told to attend a meeting on Friday. I found out that the Board of Education was to vote on the approval of plan to spend the very money we were meeting about. The problem is the clergy meeting was two days after the vote. Of course I was perturbed and went “off”.

In jest this is what I sent to the media and CPS.

Englewood has the highest unemployment rate in the city and jobs that will be created because that is the major purpose of the stimulus money will go to a company in Pennsylvania that does the exact same services that we have done for years. Back door politics, secret votes, no community input into strategies and no bid contracts have bee the history of city politics and we will not allow this occur again at the expense of our children lives .For Mr. Hubberman to conduct a meeting with clergy after the vote has been passed is very disrespectful and will not be tolerated. We are prepared to have a sit in protest of the vote and are equally prepared to go to jail for the sake of our children. Finally, we will formally and publicly announce that because of the way the city conducts business without community support we can in good conscience believe they will fulfill the many promises the have made as it relates to the 2016 Olympics therefore the community of Englewood will withdraw our support of the Olympic bid and send a letter to the IOC. We must make a stand

We will come under tremendous attack. And there will be some stuff that doesn't go right but I need to exercise spiritual maturity and speak like Job "thou they slay yet will I serve him." This is a great truth, once we truly know that life is difficult once we truly understand and accept it—then life is no longer difficult. Because once it has been accepted, the fact that life is difficult no longer matters. Most do not fully see this truth. Instead they moan more or less incessantly, noisily or subtly, about the enormity of their problems, their burdens, and their difficulties as if life were generally easy, as if life should be easy they voice their belief. That their difficulties represent a unique kind of affliction that should not be, and that somehow has been especially visited upon them.

We need to resist the temptation to be small when our children lives are at stake. When there are jobs, funding and resources being distributed to others in our face. We begin to give power and strength to what is natural. We mistakenly give the enemy credit for God's divine preparation. By claiming an attack of the enemy instead of claiming the Lord's faithfulness because every morning new mercies are received.

This is why James flips the script and tells the Diaspora the scattered tribes of Israel he says I have considered all the things we have been through and how God has brought us over and threw and I count it all joy. Because in life's ups and downs I am being completed and perfected that some how all things are working together for my good.

Church we need to take confidence in ourselves and that we have what it takes to get the job done. We must keep the faith and that God was my only shield and my only protector, he is my rock and my fortress, he is my way maker and my bridge of trouble water. I learned to count on him for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of god, which is in Christ Jesus our lord.

Allow me to close with this story. There were two sick me in a room one laid on his back, the other by the window. Each day the man by the window would describe the events of the day,

the window apparently overlooked a park, that had a lake with ducks and swans, and children threw them bread and sailed model boats. Young lovers walked hand in hand beneath the trees, and there were flowers and stretches of grass, and games of softball. Right at the back, behind the fringe of trees was a fine view of the city skyline, the man on his back would listen to all of this, enjoying every minute. How a child nearly fell into the lake, or how beautiful the girls were in their summer dresses, or how a boy played with his puppy. He could almost see what was happening just outside the window. Then one afternoon, when his partner described a parade, he got to thinking, "why should the man next to the window have all the pleasure of seeing what goes on? Why shouldn't he get a chance? I want to sit by the window. I want to see what he is experiencing. Then one fatal night the man by the window became gravely ill he died in his sleep the other man made his request, please put me by the window.

He got next to the window and pulled himself up to see what the other made had been describing he was amazed because what he saw was a brick wall. The man had made up in his mind to see things as they should be not as they were.

And I don't care what is outside my window I have made up mind.

I will see things that are not as if they are;

I will dream the impossible; I will do the unthinkable;

I will accomplish all my ambitions;

And even if I don't see them I will describe and speak them just like they should be. Because God has something with our name on it and we will not be denied. We will not be doubled mind but we shall be like Joshua as for me and my house we shall serve the Lord.

I will think big, live large and dream enormous, because I got a made up mind.

APPENDIX E

NON PARTICPANT FAMILY MEMBER INTERVIEW

POST FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH NON PARTICPANT FAMILY MEMBER

(Conducted the week of October 5th – 10th, 2009)

Questions:

1. Did any of your family members that attended LCC in the last four weeks return after church and discuss the sermon contents?
2. What topic was discussed?
3. Which family member started the discussion?

APPENDIX F

DR. JEREMIAH WRIGHT, JR. LETTER OF SUPPORT

r

Dear Dr. Jeremiah Wright:

I greet you in the matchless name of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus and it is my prayer that this missive finds you in great spirit and health.

I found it a necessity to write you this epistle as it relates to the current attack upon you as a prophet, teacher and awesome man of God. I have lived and glean from the richness of your ministry my entire life. You have been a guiding force and a true voice in the wilderness and I thank you for being a mentor from afar.

In spite of being a member of Sweet Holy Spirit and a spiritual son of Bishop Larry D. Trotter I always have and always will boast that I am a secret member of Trinity like Nicodemus. Most recently I attended your 36th anniversary and again was blessed by my Mentor Dr. Rudolph McKissick but in particular of being in your presence a true person of love, truth, and integrity.

We at Liberation Christian Center pledge our undying faith to you and the cause. Just wanted to tell you from some of the young men in Chicago that have watched you; that I love you, Sir.

In closing, it was the highlight of ministry when I was able to stand next to the great Dr. Jeremiah Wright when a friend of mine was married at Trinity. Be encouraged because it was the words from your mouth that create the atmosphere for the world to have the 1st African American President of these United States and they will never be able to deny that fact.

Love and Respect

Bishop Designate James E. Dukes, MA, MATS
Liberation Christian Center, Senior Pastor
International Overseer of Social Impact UCCC
Board Member of Pastor's of Englewood
Sergeant of Arms Clergy Speak Interdenominational

APPENDIX F

SUN TIMES EDITORIAL
SERITA WOODS SLAYING

March 6, 2009

Dear: The Beloved Community AND Sun Times Editorial Board

"Who Won"

In March 2006 the community of Englewood was devastated by the senseless slaying of Serita White as she prepared to celebrate her 10th birthday in her family's home. The impact of her killing was heart wrenching and the community and public response was immediate outrage. It took her blood to bring the minds and consciousness of Englewood, City of Chicago, and the State of Illinois to cry out enough is enough.

From these murders the need to vent the frustration in Englewood was emerging through a grassroots response. Men in the community came together in dialogue to say that this is enough and change has to come to this community. A march was planned to address the issues, unemployment, food deserts, lack of recreational activities, failing schools and police brutality, which collectively fueled violent behaviors in the community.

We took to the street marching and protesting against the rash of killings of our babies; a mass concert was attended by many of the "whose who" of politics. Media converged on the community and results were expected and action was promised. But once the media had departed and other lives were extinguished Serita's life was destined to become another ghetto tragedy. I, her mother, Liberation Christian Center, and dedicated public officials such as Dr. Carol Adams refused to let this happen. Her dying would not be in vain.

Programs and grants were established and implemented to deal with the surplus of ex offenders that were returning to the Englewood community. Summer Jobs were established to give hope to the children of Englewood. An annual birthday celebration was established in remembrance of this young life that never had a chance to reach its potential.

Then an odd thing happen on March 4, 2009 almost 3 years today the date of her slaying. Setita's mother (Serita Woods) called me and shouted in the phone *"Bishop we won"*. Ms. Wood's was making reference to the conviction of Moses Phillips of her daughter. But the more insightful question was what have we won. What type of society have we become were a grieving mother's only solace can be found in the destruction of another life?

Have we used parades, marches, concerts and memorial celebrations as form of delusion that a victory is imminent? Have we used programs and grants to soak up the blood of our children? Have we placed a band aid solution on the ills of communities when we all know that major surgery is needed?

As sad as it is the truth remains nobody won when the verdict was read. Serita lost, Moses Phillips lost, both families lost, Englewood lost, the city lost, the state lost and the world lost. The only victory was that the masquerade of justice had pulled a fast one on us again.

Why have we all lost because we can wake up tomorrow to headlines of yet another young child slain and all that we have done seems to make no difference in a place where killing is expected and accepted?

How many more lives, families and futures must die before we all try to concentrate on a true victory.

Love and Respect

+Bishop James E. Dukes

Liberation Christian Center, Senior Pastor

LIBERATED, Inc, CEO

National Auxiliary Bishop of Social Impact United Covenant Churches of Christ

Board Member, Pastors of Englewood

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